

4-2017

Situating African American Muslim Slave Narratives in American Literature

Muna Sulaiman Nasser Al Badaai

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uaeu.ac.ae/all_theses

Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nasser Al Badaai, Muna Sulaiman, "Situating African American Muslim Slave Narratives in American Literature" (2017). *Theses*. 718.
https://scholarworks.uaeu.ac.ae/all_theses/718

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Scholarworks@UAEU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarworks@UAEU. For more information, please contact fadl.musa@uaeu.ac.ae.



جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

United Arab Emirates University

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

SITUATING AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSLIM SLAVE
NARRATIVES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Muna Sulaiman Nasser Al Badaai

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

Under the Supervision of Dr. Doris Hambuch

April 2017

Declaration of Original Work

I, Muna Sulaiman Nasser Al Badaai, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this dissertation entitled "*Situating African American Muslim Slave Narratives in American Literature*", hereby, solemnly declare that this dissertation is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Doris Hambuch, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my dissertation have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this dissertation.

Student's Signature: Muna AlBadaai

Date: 3 May 2017

Approval of the Doctorate Dissertation

This Doctorate Dissertation is approved by the following Examining Committee Members:

- 1) Advisor (Committee Chair): Doris Hambuch

Title: Associate Professor

Department of English Literature

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Signature 

Date 11 April 2017

- 2) Member: Manfred Malzahn

Title: Professor

Department of English Literature

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Signature 

Date 11 April 2017

- 3) Member: El-Sayed El-Aswad

Title: Professor

Department of Sociology

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Signature 

Date 11 April 2017

- 4) Member (External Examiner): Werner Sollors

Title: Professor

Department of Comparative Literature

Institution: Harvard University (USA)

Signature 

Date April 11, 2017

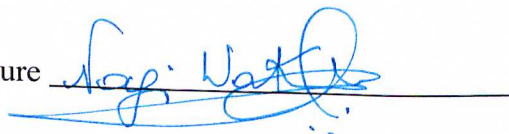
This Doctorate Dissertation is accepted by:

Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences: Professor Hassan Al-Naboodah

Signature 

Date _____

Dean of the College of Graduate Studies: Professor Nagi T. Wakim

Signature 

Date 9/5/2017

Copy 6 of 11

Copyright © 2017 Muna Sulaiman Nasser Al Badaai
All Rights Reserved

Advisory Committee

1) Advisor: Doris Hambuch

Title: Associate Professor

Department of English Literature

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

2) Co-advisor: Phyllisa Deroze

Title: Assistant Professor

Department of English Literature

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

3) Member: Amna Al Ahbabi

Title: Assistant Professor

Department of English Literature

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Abstract

Slave narrative as a genre became popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and narratives of enslaved African American Muslims originate between 1734 and 1873. Examples of enslaved African American Muslims are Ayyub ben Suleiman (Job ben Solomon), Omar ibn Said, Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, Lamine Kebe, Mohammad Ali ben Said (Nicolas Said) and Bilali Muhammad (Ben Ali). Their narratives are not anthologized. This dissertation explores Muslim and non-Muslim African American slave narratives from a comparative perspective. It proposes the inclusion of African American Muslim slave narratives in American literature.

Chapter one reviews critical approaches to canonization and discusses possible reasons for the exclusion of narratives by enslaved African American Muslims from the American canon. Chapter two defines the slave narrative genre in light of the socio-historical background on slavery in narratives by enslaved African American Muslims. Chapter three focuses on the characteristics of early African American slave narratives and analyzes Ayyub ben Suleiman's account. Chapter four discusses characteristics of antebellum African American slave narratives and analyzes and compares narratives of enslaved African American Muslims with Frederick Douglass's narrative. Chapter five focuses on the post-bellum slave narrative by Mohammad Ali Ben Said (Nicholas Said), and discusses characteristics of the post-Civil War slave narrative.

The addition of narratives by enslaved African American Muslims would provide a more complete portrait of enslaved people and their writings at a crucial

stage in American history. The study will ultimately contribute to current debates about literary canonization.

Keywords: American literary canon, African American literature, Enslaved African American Muslims, Frederick Douglass, slave narrative.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

تأصيل روايات المستعبدين الأمريكيين المسلمين في الأدب الأمريكي

الملخص

اشتهرت روايات وكتابات المستعبدين في القرنين الثامن عشر والتاسع عشر، وكتب العديد من المسلمين في الفترة بين عام 1734-1873 ميلادي. ومن أمثال هؤلاء الكتّاب الأفارقة الأمريكيين المسلمين: أيوب بن سليمان وعبد الرحمن إبراهيم وعمر بن سعيد، لمين (الأمين) كيبي ومهمومه جاردو باكواكوا وبلال محمد ومحمد علي بن سعيد (نيكولاس سعيد). غير أن كتابات هؤلاء هُمّشت لفترة طويلة من الزمن ولم يتم إدراجها ضمن كتب مقتطفات الأدب الأمريكي. وتهدف الأطروحة إلى إجراء دراسة مقارنة بغرض مناقشة روايات الرقيق الأفارقة الأمريكيين المسلمين والغير مسلمين. حيث تسلط الضوء على التماثلات والاختلافات بين هذين النوعين من الروايات وبالتالي إدراج كتابات الأفارقة الرقيق المسلمين وضمها إلى كتب المقتطفات الأدبية الأمريكية.

ويقوم منهج البحث على عرض المعلومات العامة، ومراجعة الدراسات السابقة في موضوع روايات الرقيق، وتحليل كلا النوعين من الروايات. الفصل الأول هو مراجعة لمناهج نقدية في إدراج الكتابات في كتب المقتطفات الأدبية، وسيناقش هذا الفصل أيضاً أسباب اقضاء كتابات المستعبدين الأفارقة الأمريكيين المسلمين من الأدب الأمريكي. والفصل الثاني يعرض روايات المستعبدين ويعرّفها باعتبارها نوعاً أدبياً وذلك من خلال مناقشة قضية الاستعباد من منظورات اجتماعية وتاريخية. والفصل الثالث يركز على سمات روايات الرقيق الأفارقة الأمريكيين منذ بداياتها ويحلل نص أيوب بن سليمان. والفصل الرابع يراجع خصائص روايات الأفارقة الأمريكيين المستعبدين ما قبل الحرب القومية. إضافة إلى ذلك، يقوم هذا الفصل بتحليل كتابات المستعبدين المسلمين ومقارنتها برواية فريدريك دوغلاس. والفصل الخامس يناقش خصائص روايات المستعبدين ما بعد الحرب القومية ويحلل رواية محمد علي بن سعيد.

سيساعد دمج هذه الكتابات في الأدب الأمريكي على استقطاب شريحة أكبر من القراء والنقاد الأكاديميين. إذ تعتبر عملية إدراج كتابات الأفارقة الرقيق المسلمين ضمن الأدب الأمريكي محاولةً لإعطاء صورة أشمل عن الرقيق وكتاباتهم. وبالتالي، سيكون لهذه الدراسة

دور هام في المناظرة الجارية حول قضية تأسيس الكتب الأدبية الموثقة واختيار النصوص الأدبية.

مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية: الأدب الأفرو أمريكي، الأدب الأمريكي، الأفارقة الأمريكيين المسلمين المستعبدين، روايات المستعبدين، فريدريك دو غلاس.

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks are to Allah whose generosity has overwhelmed me. I acknowledge with a deep sense of gratitude my mother and father for their love and support that have enabled me to reach this stage.

I am grateful to Dr. Willie Harris, formerly of United Arab Emirates University, who introduced me to the topic of enslaved African American Muslims through his lecture on “Black Classism.” This lecture led me to ask why the works by these enslaved people were not included in the anthologies of American literature. Much appreciation and credit to my research supervisor Dr. Doris Hambuch, who has been a sister, a friend and a colleague to me. She has supported me with constructive criticism and encouraged me to participate in academic activities, which have developed my skills as a researcher. From my point of view, Dr. Hambuch has served as an excellent example of a PhD research supervisor. I would like also to express special thanks to Dr. Phyllisa Deroze, my research co-advisor, for discussions and her critical and valuable comments and suggestions which have strengthened the study. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Amna Al Ahbabi, my research committee member.

I owe a debt of gratitude to United Arab Emirates University, where I have completed my undergraduate and postgraduate education. I would like to thank other universities, libraries and scholars who helped me in getting sources and information to complete this study. Special thanks to Prof. Benyan Turki from Kuwait University; Dr. Zachary Wright from Northwestern University in Qatar; and The Department of English Language and Literature at Bahrain University. I would like to extend my thanks to Prof. Barbara McCaskill from the University of Georgia;

and the University of Georgia libraries. With the help of Prof. McCaskill, I accessed the original nineteenth-century manuscript written by Bilali Muhammed. I am grateful to Mr. John Hart and the SASP Writing Center at United Arab Emirates University, represented by Ms. Elizabeth Whitehouse, for feedback and advice on editing the dissertation. Finally, I am very thankful to my siblings and friends for their support and encouragement.

Dedication

To my beloved parents, family and the memory of my grandmother

Table of Contents

Title	i
Declaration of Original Work	ii
Copyright	iii
Advisory Committee	iv
Approval of the Doctorate Dissertation	v
Abstract	vii
Title and Abstract (in Arabic)	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Dedication	xiii
Table of Contents	xiv
List of Figures	xvi
List of Abbreviations.....	xvii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework - Canonization.....	12
1.1 Review and Definition of Canon.....	16
1.2 Critical Approaches to Traditional American Literary Canonization.....	20
1.3 Critical Approaches to Multiethnic American Literary Canonization.....	24
1.4 Enslaved African American Muslims and the American Literary Canon	31
1.4.1 Ayyub Ben Suleiman (Job Ben Solomon) (1702-1773)	32
1.4.2 Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim (1762-1829)	32
1.4.3 Omar Ibn Said (1765-1864)	34
1.4.4 Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua (1830-?).....	34
1.4.5 Mohammad Ali Ben Said (Nicholas Said) (1836-1882).....	35
1.5 Discussion of Exclusion of Narratives by Enslaved African American Muslims.....	36
Chapter 2: Defining Slave Narrative as a Genre in Light of Socio-Historical Background on Slavery in Narratives by Enslaved African American Muslims.....	49
2.1 Genres of Life Writings: Defining Slave Narrative as a Genre	50
2.2 Socio-Historical Background	61
2.2.1 Slavery and Islamic Principles	61
2.2.2 Education in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries West Africa	76
2.3 Enslaved African American Muslims	83
2.3.1 Ayyub Ben Suleiman	84
2.3.2 Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim	91
2.3.3 Omar Ibn Said	94
2.3.4 Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua.....	104
2.3.5 Mohammad Ali Ben Said	111
2.4 Conclusion	119

Chapter 3: Pre-antebellum (Early) Slave Narratives - Positioning Ayyub Ben Suleiman's Testimony.....	120
3.1 Ayyub's Testimony and Slave Narrative Criticism	120
3.2 General Characteristics of Early Slave Narrative (Proto-slave Narrative) ..	125
3.3 Analysis and Characteristics of Ayyub's Testimony	129
3.4 Conclusion: Positioning Ayyub's Testimony	138
Chapter 4: The Antebellum Slave Narrative - Comparison of Douglass's <i>Narrative</i> and Narratives by Enslaved African American Muslims.....	141
4.1 General Characteristics of and Criticisms on Antebellum Slave Narratives:	146
4.2 Canonizing Douglass: Douglass and Criticism.....	151
4.3 Comparison of Douglass's <i>Narrative</i> to Narratives by Abdr-Rahman, Omar and Mahommah.....	160
4.3.1 Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim	162
4.3.2 Omar Ibn Said	176
4.3.3 Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua.....	187
4.4 Conclusion	201
Chapter 5: Positioning Postbellum Mohammad Ali Ben Said's (Nicholas Said) <i>Autobiography</i>	205
5.1 General Characteristics of the Postbellum Slave Narrative	205
5.2 Analysis and Characteristics of Said's <i>Autobiography</i>	207
5.3 Conclusion: Positioning Said's <i>Autobiography</i> in the American Canon	221
Conclusion	223
References	228
List of Publications	239
Appendix	240

List of Figures

Figure 1: An excerpt from Omar's <i>Life</i> (1831).....	183
--	-----

List of Abbreviations

ACS	American Colonization Society
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him

Introduction

Anthologies which respond to a recent increased interest in slave narratives include: *African American Slave Narratives: An Anthology* (2001) in three volumes edited by Starling Lecater Bland Jr.; *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* (2007) edited by Audrey Fisch; *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative* (2014) edited by John Ernest; *The Cambridge Companion to Slavery in American Literature* (2016) edited by Ezra Tawil; and *Understanding 19th-Century Slave Narratives* (2016) edited by Starling Lecater Bland. However, all these anthologies and studies continue to marginalize the writings by enslaved African American Muslims. Regardless, some scholars argue that there are connections between Islam and early American literature. For instance, Timothy Marr, in his article “‘Out of This World’: Islamic Irruptions in the Literary Americas” (2006), argues “that the appearance of Islam in American situations . . . has been a dynamic and variable intercultural process since the earliest days of European settlement in the continents that came to be called the “New World” (522). More specifically, Will Harris’s article “Phillis Wheatley: A Muslim Connection” (2015) argues that Phillis Wheatley was a Muslim and her Islamic conceptions and beliefs are presented in her poems (1). Jeffrey Einboden’s book *The Islamic Lineage of American Literary Culture: Muslim Sources from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (2016) also discusses the involvement of Islam in early American writings. These studies and others support the argument for the contributions of Islamic traditions in the formation of American literary history.

Historians indicate that a large proportion of enslaved Africans forcibly transported to the New World were Muslims. According to Allan D. Austin,

approximately 29,695 African Muslims were taken to the United States during the antebellum period, while Michael Gomez in his article “Muslims in Early America” states that they “may have come to America by the thousands, if not tens of thousands” (682). Sylviane Diouf estimates that about twenty-four percent of enslaved Africans who were brought to “the thirteen colonies and later the United States” were from Senegambia, a region between Senegal and Gambia rivers. This region, as Diouf remarks, “had, potentially, the highest proportion of Muslims.” Diouf indicates that there “were hundreds of thousands of Muslims in the Americas” (*Servants* 70).

Austin is the editor of *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (1984), which is one of the most important books in the study of enslaved Muslims. This book provides the documents, writings, letters and newspaper articles that were written by these enslaved Muslims or are related to them. In 1997, Austin published his book *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles*, in which he discusses more than seventy-five enslaved African Muslims in North America and seven of them in depth. Diouf’s *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (1998), appeared in a revised and expanded edition in 2013, and gives socio-historical background information about enslaved African Muslims and their practices and behavior in the New World. The most frequently discussed names among these enslaved African Muslims in the United States are Ayyub ben Suleiman (Job ben Solomon), Yarrow Mammout, Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, Omar ibn Said, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, Lamine Kebe, Salih Bilali, Muhammad Ali Ben Said (Nicolas Said) and Bilali Muhammad.

In the case of studies in the field of African American Muslim slave narratives, few have been carried out compared to those on non-Muslim African American slave narratives. Abdulhafeez Turkistani's dissertation "Muslim Slaves and Their Narratives: Religious Faith and Cultural Accommodation" (1995) is an example. Turkistani argues that contemporary and modern editors of African American Muslims slave narrative have misrepresented the narratives due to the lack of understanding of the Islamic culture and background (10-11). Safet Dabovic's dissertation "Displacement and the Negotiation of an American Identity in African Muslim Slave Narratives" (2009) argues that since narratives by enslaved African American Muslims "produced complicated expressive texts that problematize national and religious boundaries, [they are] requiring us to expand the traditional methodologies of reading slave narratives" (iii). Similarly, Ronald Judy's book *(Dis)Forming the American Canon: African-Arabic Slave Narratives and the Vernacular* (1993) attempts to include African Muslim slave narratives in the American canon by arguing for the inclusion of Bilali Muhammad's narrative, or as Judy refers to it, Ben Ali's Diary.

The first chapter of Muhammad Al-Ahari's book, *Five Classic Muslim Slave Narratives* (2006), is entitled "Rescuing Arabic and English Islamic Slave Narratives from the Shifting Sands of Time: The Historicity of Muslim Slave Narratives in the Americas." In this chapter, Al-Ahari states that most of the studies and books revolving around narratives by enslaved African Muslims focus on "comparative slavery" and not on the texts themselves. The book is simply a collection of the narratives of these enslaved Muslims rather than a literary commentary. Dabovic's dissertation analyzes narratives by enslaved African American Muslims in the light of postcolonial and post-structuralist theories especially by Gilles Deleuze and Felix

Guattari, Stuart Hall, Angelica Bammer, Edouard Glissant and Homi Bhabha (5). In 2011, Ala Alryyes's book *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said* provided a translation of an Arabic autobiography by Omar ibn Said with a deeper attempt at literary commentary. Similar to Alryyes's study, the present dissertation aims to discuss and analyze the narratives by enslaved African American Muslims and to advance their inclusion in American literature because of their cultural, historical and literary importance.

Narratives of enslaved African American Muslims were written between 1734 and 1873. These narratives and their writers have been mostly neglected; indeed, as Al-Ahari claims, the subject of Muslim slave narratives is "often overlooked" in the discussion of the birth of African American literature (8). These enslaved African American Muslims were literate in Arabic before their enslavement, and in their tribal languages as well since Arabic was not their first language, and they left varied manuscripts. Dabovic states that these "Muslims produced innovative slave narratives that made fascinating contributions to the formation of black cultural identity in the United States and throughout Latin America" ("Out" 59). In his book *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature* (2011), Wail S. Hassan underlines the contributions by enslaved African American Muslims to the formation of Arab American identity (79). I believe the lack of literary scholarship in African Muslim slave narratives explains their absence of these narratives in African American literature. Florence Marfo in her article "African Muslims in African American Literature" (2009) presents some possible reasons that have led "commentators on African American literature" to exclude the early narratives of enslaved Muslims from anthologies of African American literature (1213). Marfo

concludes that there “are some tentative grounds for including early narratives by Muslims within broader discussion of early narratives by non-Muslim slaves and the slave narrative genre” (1220).

Some scholars, such as Austin, Marfo, Dabovic and Turkistani, have labelled these enslaved Muslims as “African Muslims.” In his article “Coercions, Conversions, Subversions: The Nineteenth-Century Slave Narratives of Omar ibn Said, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, and Nicholas Said,” Patrick Horn cautions that they are “African [American] Muslims” (47). This present dissertation labels these enslaved narrators as “African American Muslims” since they experienced slavery or wrote their slave narratives in the United States.

National identities of enslaved African American Muslims have been frequently questioned. Scholars have compared enslaved African American Muslims to Frederick Douglass concerning his assertion for his American citizenship. For example, Jill Lepore claims Abdr-Rahman, an African Muslim enslaved in the United States did not show interest in being American, unlike Douglass (126). Werner Sollors states that Omar ibn Said, another African Muslim enslaved in the United States, was “as American as Frederick Douglass” (*The Multilingual* 5). This comparison informs Chapter 4 of the present study. In fact all African American Muslim slave narratives were written by authors who were African-born. Paul Lovejoy suggests that the narratives of African-born enslaved people would be better named “freedom narratives” since they experience freedom before their enslavement (“Freedom” 93). Al-Ahari believes that African American Muslim slave writings “can be called the true beginnings of American Islamic English Literature” (12).

However, African American Muslim slave writings were not discussed deeply¹ in some primary studies of African American slave narratives and their characteristics, such as William Andrews's *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* and Frances Smith Foster's study *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives*.² Considering the characteristics of African American Muslim slave narratives and comparing them to conventions of non-Muslim African American slave narrative, can provide a more comprehensive picture of the former narratives to position them in the field and therefore enrich the slave narrative genre.

Regarding the period of the slave narrative, Charles Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. believe that slave narratives are “only those *written* works published before 1865, after which time *de jure* slavery ceased to exist” (xii). In the same vein, Foster claims Douglass's third narrative *The Life and The Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881) does not belong to the slave narrative genre, since “the era of the slave narrative had passed” (148). However, some scholars, such as Andrews, Charles J. Heglar and Charles Edgar Wilson, extend the period of the slave narrative beyond the year of abolition. They traced the evolution of African American slave narratives and have divided them into three periods or phases: early (pre-antebellum) slave narratives, antebellum slave narratives and postbellum slave narratives. Even though the slave narratives have been categorized in three periods, they differ in time period from one scholar to another. In the first chapter of *Rethinking Slave Narrative: Slave Marriage and the Narratives of Henry Bibb and Ellen Craft*, Heglar divides the

¹ The argument of the absence of narrative by enslaved African American Muslims is also mentioned by Horn in the notes to his article (62).

² Foster only discusses the account of Ayyub ben Suleiman (Job ben Solomon) and compares it to Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* (33-36, 42, 46-47).

narratives into the proto slave narrative of colonial and early national periods, the “classic” narratives which were written between 1831 and 1861 and those written after the Civil War. In his dissertation, Wilson limits each phase to a specific time period according to “different traits and emphases in regard to narrative voice, plot development, and the depiction of slavery” (1). The first period was from 1760 to 1820, the second period from was from 1820 to 1885 and the last phase “post-1885, is best represented by the 1936-38 Works Progress Administration interviews” (1).

The present study focuses on five enslaved African American Muslim narrators who represent the three periods of the slave narrative genre. These authors are Ayyub ben Suleiman (Job ben Solomon), Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, Omar ibn Said, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua and Muhammad Ali ben Said (Nicholas Said). Regarding names of enslaved Muslims, some scholars call them by their first names be that in Arabic or English, or by second name or the last given name. For instance, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* narrates that his name is “HYUBA, BOON SALUMENA, BOON HIBRAHEMA; i.e. JOB, the Son of Solomon, the Son of Abraham The Sirname of his Family is Jallo” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 77). However, Thomas Bluett, who wrote down *Some Memoirs*, has misspelled the name. Therefore, Turkistani calls him by his Arabic name Ayyub, whereas Dabovic and Philip Curtin prefer to call him Ayuba. Foster refers to him as Diallo, Ayyub’s family name, which Bluett misspells as Jallo. Regarding Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, some scholars refer to as Ibrahima Abdul-ar-Rahaman, Ibrahima, Abdul-ar-Rahman, Prince as his master named him, or Abduhl Rahahman as contemporary editors wrote, and other related translated names. Terry Alford, a biographer of Abdr-Rahman’s life story *Prince Among Slaves*, refers to Abdr-Rahman as Ibrahima. However, Abdr-Rahman in his short Arabic autobiography writes his name as Abdr-

Rahman Ibrahim. The present study refers to these five enslaved African American Muslims by their first names, Ayuba, Abdr-Rahman, Omar and Mahommah. I believe that referring to them by their first names is keeping with their tradition and the way in which they would refer to themselves. For example, some of these narrators, such as Omar ibn Said, their second names refer to their fathers' names rather than their last name, here ibn Said means son of Said.³ Also, referring to them by their African/ Arabic names rather than Christianized names reflects part of their Islamic identities. The exception is Muhammad Ali Ben (Nicholas) Said who, in his autobiography, mentions his name after he was baptized as Nicholas Said. Thus, I refer to him as Said, since that is the only Arabic name that is left after his conversion and also used as his last name in Western culture. Arguably, calling him Said reflects his complicated identity.

Chapter 1 is a theoretical discussion of a literary canon. The debate is whether canonization is an institutional activity, which is influenced by cultural, political, academic institutions, or just depends on literary aesthetic values. This disagreement is one of the reasons why literary canons become undone. The chapter also discusses the critical approaches of traditionalist and multiethnic American literary canonization. Generally, traditionalists are concerned with the artistic values of a literary work as a fundamental standard in canonization. Conversely, liberalists, who call for the expansion of the American literary canon, aim to represent works by.. other ethnicities. The chapter also introduces the five enslaved African American Muslims and ends with a discussion of possible reasons that led to the exclusion of the narratives. The discussion concludes that the reasons for their exclusion are

³ However, for in-text citation, the present study cites Omar as "Ibn Said," following the MLA convention.

insufficient. Indeed, their inclusion in the American literary canon would reflect the multiculturalism of American society.

Chapter 2 has two parts. The first part discusses genres of life writings, such as autobiography, biography, memoir and slave narrative. Narratives by enslaved African American Muslims have different titles, for instance, Ayyub's memoirs, Abdr-Rahman's autobiography, Omar's life, Mahommah's biography, and Said's autobiography. The chapter defines slave narrative as a genre and gives the rationale for choosing the discussed narratives by enslaved African American Muslims. The second part provides a socio-historical background of enslaved African American Muslims focusing first on Islamic perspective on slavery. Slavery was practiced in Africa before the advent of Islam and the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade. Another socio-historical perspective is education. Since many of these African Muslim narrators were educated in Arabic and some of them wrote their narratives in that language, this chapter discusses education and widely known texts in Islamic West Africa during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of these texts influenced the writings of enslaved African American Muslims. Finally, the chapter analyzes Islamic understandings of slavery and influences of education through the five narratives by enslaved African American Muslims. The socio-historical perspective supports the multiethnic approach in canonization to include these narratives in the mainstream of American literature.

Chapter 3 focuses on pre-antebellum slave narratives. Firstly, it discusses the general characteristics of slave narratives during this period. Then it analyzes and discusses *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* (1734) written by Thomas Bluett. Austin claims that Ayyub ben Suleiman is the "father of African American Literature"

(*Transatlantic* 51). Ayyub's narrative presents the idea of the "noble savage," which was a popular characteristic of early slave narratives. Other characteristics of *Some Memoirs* contribute in the formation of slave narrative and early American literature in general.

Chapter 4, "The Antebellum Slave Narrative: Comparison of Douglass's Narrative and Narratives by Enslaved African American Muslims," discusses Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) and three possible reasons for canonizing Douglass. These reasons are related to his character as a self-made man, his participation in American social and political issues and his writings. The chapter also reviews general characteristics of antebellum African American slave narratives; and analyzes and compares antebellum narratives by Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, Omar ibn Said and Mahommah Baquaqua to Douglass's *Narrative*. These narratives are rich in characteristics; they include a translated slave narrative, an Arabic autobiography and auto/biographical narrative respectively, thus making the study of African American slave narratives more complete. They further broaden the definition of the slave narrative genre.

Chapter 5 discusses Muhammad Ali Ben Said's (Nicholas Said) *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said; a Native of Bornou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa* in 1873. There is little scholarship concerning enslaved African American Muslim narrators and Said has received the least attention among these. This is presumably because not only did Said experience his enslavement outside the United States, as did Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, but his narrative was published after the Civil War. The chapter attempts to position Said's postbellum slave narrative in the American literary canon. Said's *Autobiography* provides a commentary narrative that

reflects American social issues before and after the Civil War and his participation in the process of social change during the Reconstruction Era.

The dissertation concludes by summing up the characteristics of narratives by enslaved African American Muslims. These narratives have similar and distinct characteristics to other African American slave narratives and enrich the slave narrative genre. The conclusion also calls into question the claim that narratives by enslaved African American Muslims should not be included in the American literary canon due to their small number compared to non-Muslim African American narratives.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework - Canonization

The Heath Anthology of American Literature (1990) edited by Paul Lauter was the first anthology to include voices of minorities in American literature. The production of this anthology was a result of literary criticism movements in the 1960s and 1970s. These movements in turn were results of American social and political movements, for example the Civil Rights movement, which advocated a new understanding of American literary history and the inclusion of marginalized voices in American literature. The traditional or “classic” American literary canon focuses on Anglo-American male writers and their works which has led to classification of writers as “major” or “minor” and to designation of some literary works as ‘masterpieces’ that represent American literature. These “masterpieces” in fact represent one specific American ethnic group rather than all Americans. Mary Jo Bona and Irma Maini, editors of *Multiethnic Literature and Canon Debates* (2006), correctly state that the literary canon is about power in which the dominant culture is represented most (8). Therefore, these movements have also influenced scholars and critics to question the concept of canon, standards in canon-formation, its values, and further issues, such as having an open canon. For example, the canon reformation movement raised the question of the nature of canonization and whether it should be a cultural and political process, since it tries to reflect a democratic purpose in presenting all American ethnicities, or whether it should be a merely literary and aesthetic process. These issues of canonization have continued to the present.

Annette Kolodny was among the first critics to support the expansion and inclusion of marginalized voices in the American literary history. In her article, “The Integrity of Memory: Creating a New Literary History of the United States” (1985),

she calls for the builders of American literary history and canon to consider the diversity of American voices. She states that “if there was something uniquely ‘American’ about our nation and our literary inheritance, it was not a harmonious commonality or shared traditions but diversity, division, and discord” (307). However, she does not argue for the inclusion of other religious identities in the American literary history. *The Heath Anthology* (1990), which plays “a pivotal role in canon expansion and transformation” (Bona and Maini 10),

includes material by 109 women of all races, 25 individual Native American authors (as well as 17 texts from tribal origins), 53 African-Americans, 13 Hispanics (as well as 12 texts from earlier Spanish originals and two from French), and 9 Asian-Americans. (xxxvi-xxxvii)

When Lauter continues to emphasize “significant selections from Jewish, Italian, and other ethnic traditions,” his somewhat awkward enumeration omits the Muslim tradition from the anthology.

Allan Austin published *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (1984) during the period of American canon reformation. His book focuses on the writings and documents that were written by or related to enslaved African American Muslims in the Americas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Austin’s study followed similar anthologies which appeared in the 1970s and are concerned with American writers of different ethnicities, such as African-American, Chicanos, Native Americans and Asian Americans.⁴ However, voices of

⁴ Some examples of these anthologies are: *Black Writers of America: A Comprehensive Anthology* (1972) by Richard Barksdale and Kenneth Kimmamon;

enslaved African American Muslims were neglected among the “53 African-Americans” presented in *The Heath*. None of subsequent editions of *The Heath* (1990-2014) has discussed enslaved Muslims or their writings. Along with *The Heath*, many American literary anthologies, for instance *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997) edited by Henry Gates Jr. and Nellie McKay, start the discussion about American Muslims with Malcolm X and his *Autobiography* or *The Ballot or the Bullet* in the 1960s.

The present study does not propose a radical reconstruction of the American literary canon or provide an ideal model of an American literary anthology. Instead, it proposes, in general, to take a middle position in canon reconstruction, which does not mean to disregard the old or distinguished American literary works and their criticism, but to create a place for other minority writers to present and give a more complete image and understanding of American society. In particular, the study discusses, supports and advances the inclusion of enslaved African American Muslims, previously neglected or marginalized from the mainstream of American literature. Some of these narratives, which vary in genres, including letters, biographies and autobiographies, can be included in the discussion of other types of genres. They are however, all part of slave narrative studies. The argument of presenting enslaved African American Muslims’ writings in different fields of studies is related to Robert Hemenway’s assertion, in his article “In the American Canon,” that African American writings should be included in all American literary courses.

Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature (1972) edited by Stan Steiner and Luiz Valdez; and *American Indian Literature: Anthology* (1979) by Alan Velie.

My very practical purpose is to urge that we press forward in our efforts to expand the canon, that we open the door even wider than before by including black writers in our standard English curriculum at every level and in every way—not just in the obligatory black literature class created during the late 1960s to purchase peace and keep the students from occupying the faculty club, but in all our American literature classes, all our genre courses, all our composition courses. (63)

Similarly, narratives by enslaved African American Muslims also reflect the political, historical, cultural and social composition of the diverse American background and they should be recognized in American literature. The life of Abdr-Rahman can be studied from a political perspective, for example when contemporary American politicians thought that he was a Moroccan prince.⁵ Another example of a writer whose work can be studied from political and religious perspectives, simultaneously, is Omar ibn Said, because of the link between his narratives and the influence of American Colonization Society (ACS), which was founded in 1816, for missionary purposes. Arguably, the literary canon should reflect the historical, cultural and political contexts of literary works. Most literary works are not composed just for art's sake or aesthetic values, as for instance, Harold Bloom, Roger Kimball and Hilton Kramer believe. Many supporters for expanding the American literary canon, for example Kolodny, Harold Kolb (45), and Nazmi Al-Shalabi and et al. (52), believe that the expansion of the canon refreshes American literature and provides it with new perspectives. This means that broadening the

⁵ Abdr-Rahman wrote a letter in Arabic language, which was received by the State Department believing that Abdr-Rahman was a Moorish prince.

canon adds new literary aesthetic values, styles and techniques, which are the main concerns of the conservatives, who view the canon from a belles-letters perspective. Therefore, expanding the canon would serve both sides of the debate regarding presenting the culture and new literary perspectives.

This chapter aims to review critical approaches to canonization and discuss controversial issues regarding canon-formation. The chapter discusses approaches to anthologizing classical “traditional” American literature and multiethnic literature. Also, it deliberates and discusses the debate of excluding narratives by enslaved African American Muslims from the American literary canon.

1.1 Review and Definition of Canon

“Canon” is originally derived from the Greek word *kanon* which means a rod or rule. In his book *The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Literary Idea* (2013), Jan Gorak traces the history and definitions of the term canon. His first chapter reviews the evolution and modification of classical and Christian canons. Gorak remarks that in the classical period the term canon initially referred to the sources that elucidate how great sculptures had been created (9). The appearance of religious canons as a list of books, of Old and New Testaments, and saints influenced the definition of literary canons as a list of literary works for a person to read in order to be educated.⁶ Regarding this, Gorak remarks that “[l]ike biblical scholars, students of humanities hope their privileged works will survive the waning of the beliefs that originally produced them” (41). Unlike the Biblical canon which has a fixed list of books, the list of a literary canon can be changed over time. It

⁶ See also Hemenway (63) and Trevor Ross (23).

merits mentioning that the Greek word *Kanon* still impacts today's use of the term canon as "a teaching guide, a norm or rule and a list of basic authorities" (Gorak 9). This definition started with the meaning of a standard and then evolved toward an evaluative meaning of what merits inclusion in a certain group (10).

Reviewing previous studies reveals that neither literary history nor canon is fixed. Literary history studies the literature, literary movements and evolution of a specific country throughout history, while canon is a selection of some authors and works that may help in representing and studying the literature of a country. V. La Vonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, the editors of *Redefining American Literary History* claim that "[a] redefining of literary history means expanding canon, forging new critical perspectives, and scrutinizing underlying cultural and ideological assumptions" (2). Ruoff and Ward's statement reflects the strong relationship between literary history and canon. It generally suggests that literary history is larger than the literary canon. However, the canon seems to be more flexible⁷ than literary history from the aspect of the ultimate purpose of canon-formation or, as J. J. A. Mooij formulates it as "what kind of canon we are actually talking about" (247). An intended perspective and approach in canonization plays a significant role in determining the kind of the canon. Also, a literary canon differs from one culture to another and according to the interest and objective of its builders. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham point out the complexity of the process of canonization due to

⁷ Bona and Maini (7), Al-Shalabi and et al. (52), Harold Kolb (40), William E. Cain (3) and Gorak's study *The Making of the Modern Canon* also indicate that the canon is not fixed. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham in the discussion of the differences between the religious and secular literature canons state that the latter "is the product of a wavering and unofficial consensus; it is tacit rather than explicit, loose in its boundaries, and always subject to changes in the works that it includes" (41, 42). See also Joseph Cecelia (xix).

critics and scholars' "theoretical viewpoints" in building a canon (42). Therefore, there are different literary canons which are based upon their literary periods, types of genres or according to cultural and social issues. For instance, Harold Bloom believes that originality, "strangeness" and the aesthetic value, are the main characteristics for literary work to be canonical (3), whereas other critics consider the historical, social, cultural, and political contexts in canon formation. Kolb claims that, "a list of great books cannot exist by itself, separate from convictions about greatness. A canon is a cultural mirror, imaging our notions of who we are. It is a national repository of historical and social values, of pedagogical notions, of ideas about the purpose of literature" (39).

The debate is whether canonization is an institutional activity, which is influenced by cultural, political, academic institutions, or just depends on literary aesthetic values. This is one of the reasons why the literary canon remains unstable. This debate appeared in the 1970s with new literary trends and theories, such as deconstructivism, feminism, Marxism, postcolonialism, historicism, which question the traditional canons and canon formation, and consider the inclusion of marginalized voices (Abrams and Harpham 42). For instance, many critics, such as Jessica Munns, William E. Cain, Kolodny, Bona and Maini, argue for opening up the literary canon. They also call for a democratic process in canon formation, especially in countries that are multicultural. In the meantime, most countries are increasingly transcultural. This debate about canonization seems to be in transition which is why the process of canonization goes round in circles, as critics Gorak (4, 8, 43) and W. M. Verhoeven (xx) believe. Verhoeven states in the introduction to *Rewriting the Dream: Reflections on the Changing American Literary Canon* that:

It is very likely that aesthetic, formalistic criteria will once more play a crucial role in deciding a text's canonical status . . . And who knows, in ten or twenty years from now, we may well look back upon the current chaos in criticism with a feeling of nostalgia and remember the 1980s and 1990s as a time when anything was possible in literary criticism. (xx)

The argument in favor of inclusion of even more diversity contrasts with Verhoeven's viewpoint. What he describes as "current chaos" appears as productive necessity in the context of the present study.

Similarly regarding the American literary canon, Kolb states that "[a] canon of American literature, however difficult to define, is necessary" (39). This study defines a literary canon as a selection of works that represents the literary, cultural, political and social perspectives of all ethnicities in a society. This definition fits with Lauter's definition of the literary canon. He believes that the canon is a "set of literary works, the grouping of significant philosophical, political, and religious texts, the particular accounts of history generally accorded cultural weight within a society" (Lauter, *Canon* ix). Part of Lauter's definition is questionable in particular in his use of the word "significant" and the phrase "accorded cultural weight within a society." These two examples raise the controversy of canonization standards, in labeling particular works as significant and worth reading, therefore they should be canonical, which depend upon the critics' viewpoints. Thus, this approach may also lead again to the result of representing writers as major and minor, which mirrors the main perspective of traditional literary canon.

1.2 Critical Approaches to Traditional American Literary Canonization

Classics and English literature were taught in the American academy until the beginning of the twentieth century. “American universities as of 1900 still had not fully achieved a sense of literary independence. Americans, harboring a sense of provincial inferiority, were wary about maintaining that their own literary past could be ranked with the hallowed traditions of England and Europe” (Csicsila 1). Later voices called for breaking away from English literature and emphasized a distinguished American literature and literary history. They claimed that the historical approach does not focus on the aesthetic values of the literary work which could also distinguish authentic American literary values from English. American scholars have tried to separate themselves from English counterparts and to insist on national identity in spelling, as Noah Webster did, and in American literature. Theodore Parker believes that slave narratives are an authentic American literary genre (Gates, *Loose Canon* 22-23; Davis and Gates xxi). However, slave narratives are not considered in the American anthologies until the 1960s when Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative* and other African American writings were published in separate anthologies.

In his first chapter on *Canons By Consensus: Critical Trends and American Literature Anthologies*, Joseph Csicsila traces the historical developments of American literary anthologies which are designed to be taught in colleges. He divides anthologizing movements into three phases; historiographical (since 1920s), new critical (1947- mid-1960s), and multicultural (1960s- present). Csicsila comments that these phases are in fact influenced by the critical trends of that time. Even though the the first two approaches in anthologizing American literature were

historiography, they represented a specific group in the society. Echoing Csicsila, Theo D'haen states that:

The “classic” American literary canon emerged in the 1920s as a result of the same kinds of shifts that are now breaking up this very same canon: demographic, political and ideological, literary theoretical, and professional. Only then these shifts made not for pluralism or multiculturalism but for centralism and cultural unitarianism. (236)

A literary canon, according to defenders of the traditional canon, is a limited list of literary works that are seen as exemplary, classic, and timeless mostly due to their highly distinguished aesthetic values and traditions. Besides this, some conservatives credit the importance of a literary work in the community as a significant principle in canonization. Or, as D'haen forms the definition, “[t]he ‘classic’ canon was presented as ‘timeless’ and as representing the highest achievement of American literature coinciding with the deepest-felt definition of what it meant to be American” (236). The proponents of the traditional canon continue defending their argument. Some prominent critics are Roger Kimball and Hilton Kramer, the editors of the journal *The New Criterion*, William Bennett, Lynne Cheney and Harold Bloom. This group claims that the expansion of the American canon would damage the “great tradition” of unity and purity of the literary canon by adding writings that are not important. Their criteria for the literary work is to have literary value and excellence. However, as Cain states, there is no clear-cut list of literary values and excellence (8). From another perspective, representing other voices can enrich American literary studies with other new techniques, aesthetic values and literary

approaches rather than reading these texts as mere historical documents. The critical analysis and discovery could give respect to minorities' literary works, as Abrams and Harpham remark: literary works "by canonical authors are the ones which, at a given time, are most kept in print, most frequently and fully discussed by literary critics and historians, and—in the present era—most likely to be included in anthologies . . . with titles such as 'World Masterpieces,' . . . or 'Great American Writers'" (41).

Another claim of conservatives, which is also related to the previous claim of the unity and cohesion of the canon, is that including voices of different American ethnicities in the anthologies leads to confusion. This claim, in particular, is related to the context of using anthologies as textbooks for the courses. As Ernest E. Leisy, the editor of *Major American Writers*, puts it:

It is still the conviction of the editors that the introductory course in American literature has suffered from trying to include too much, with the result that the student leaves the subject in a confused state of mind because he has tried to study too many authors in too short a time. (qtd. in Csicsila 15)

Simultaneously teaching students about a limited ethnic group could limit the students' knowledge and lead to their misunderstanding of American literature. However, presenting other sub-cultures could give a perspective of the richness of American literature.

New humanist critics, such as Henry Seidel Canby, and conservatives agree with the aesthetic values as an important standard in the literary work. Overall, some

critics have different perspectives in canon-formation in which some believe canonicity should move away from institutional ideologies, such as politics and history, whereas other critics insist on including these aspects in the process of canonization. For example, some critics who favor the belles-letters approach claim that literature is not a book of history. Canby, for instance, states that “literature should never be taught as history, unless the object is to teach history, not literature” (qtd. in Csicsila 6).

E. Dean Kolbas discusses other conservative perspectives related to the traditional canon formation. For instance, critics, such as Bennett and Cheney, believe that literature should be far away from a political ideology because humanities and art are different from social sciences and by including the political perspective in literature, it damages the purity of literature and its traditions. Kolbas criticizes their argument the canonical literary works in fact deal with political ideology. For instance, about T.S Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (28-29), Kolbas states that:

Of course, a monolithic and unpolitical idea of tradition is itself subject to criticism, especially when it is recalled that canon formation has been a dynamic and political process throughout history, which makes the claim of rescuing the arts and humanities *from* politics and ideology misconceived, if not futile. It is by now a truism of literary theory that all texts arise within a political context and therefore inevitably harbor some political content—whether explicit or implicit—even despite the specific intentions of their authors. (28)

Selecting some authors and making them “major” implies that these are important, whereas others are less important. What I suggest is a middle position of inclusion

which can solve the radical neglect of marginalized American voices and at the same time maintain the exemplary literary works in which this position reflects the richness and diversity of American literature.

1.3 Critical Approaches to Multiethnic American Literary Canonization

Regarding the inclusion of literary works by authors who lived before American independence, Kolodny in her article “Letting Go our Grand Obsessions: Notes Toward a New Literary History of the American Frontiers”, argues against using the word “early” in describing the precursory writers. She claims the word “early” conveys that writings are not “authentic” or outside American literature mainstream, which started with the Europeans, usually with the Puritans (3). Instead, she uses the term “frontier,” which is more accurate than “early.” Her argument is to create a new American literary history that includes the frontier voices, which preceded the European colonial period. In her article, Kolodny discusses the inclusion of the Yaqui, native North Americans, in American literary history. However, this present study uses the word “early” and the term “pre-antebellum” just to differentiate between the periods of the slave narrative genre.

Kolodny states that the result of focusing on “Puritan New England, sometimes Virginia Plantation, . . . [and] the European voyages of discovery” as the beginning of American literary history, has led to marginalize the literary history of American frontiers as part of American literature (“Letting” 12). She declares that:

I propose extending the implications of their investigations beyond European colonial beginnings; and, in the case of the historians, I want to reinforce their debt to concentrated textual analysis—all in an effort to reconceive what we mean by “history” when we address

literary history and to reconceptualize what we mean by “frontier” when we intend the Americas. My strategy is to offer an approach that allows for a more inclusive interdisciplinarity, mitigates the condescension with which we have traditionally treated the impact of region on the construction of literary texts, and at the same time frees American literary history from the persistent theories of continuity that have made it virtually impossible to treat frontier materials as other than marginalia or cultural mythology. (“Letting” 2)

A similar approach in highlighting frontier literature has been followed by the editors of *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. *The Heath* assigns in its first edition a section of “The Literature of Discovery and Exploration” and later the section was renamed “Cultures in Contact: Voices from the Imperial Frontier.” It contains the voices of Cristopher Columbus, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca and others. The editor of *The Heath*, Lauter, remarks in the preface to the second edition that the co-editors “concluded that by presenting the colonial texts in terms of ‘contact’ rather than ‘exploration’ and ‘settlement,’ we can realize more fully our goal of offering an account of multicultural literary development less driven solely by Europeans’ concerns” (xliii). Considering these early ‘contacts’ and voices is significant since they are factors in shaping the American identity and its literature. Lauter’s argument for including early and marginalized voices is a reaction to “the narrowness of what was taught as “American Literature” (xxxiii). In the preface of third edition of *The Heath*, Lauter declares that the fundamental principles in constructing the anthology are “literary value and pedagogy,” that convey the diversity of American society and present “certain themes and issues that have preoccupied most Americans” (xliv).

The proponents of expanding the canon criticize the classic canon for neglecting minorities since it falsifies the representation of American national literature. Kolodny and other critics attempt to redefine the concept of “national literature” through incorporating American multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity and diversity. The expansion of the canon is mostly ascribed to consequences of the political and social movements in the United States, such as the Civil Rights movement, Black Power movement, and the women’s movement.⁸ Actually, the movement to expand the canon also raises questions and arguments to include frontier literary works. Kolodny and Arnold Krupat separately argue for including Native American literature and are against “the singular identities and unswerving continuities that Americanists have regularly claimed for our literary history” (Kolodny, “Letting” 13). Therefore, their argument for including frontiers supports the consideration of early literary works as part of the national literature. As an example, Maurice Lee states in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass* that a reason to study Douglass as a literary figure “in the mid twentieth century has more to do with genre than racial discrimination as literary criticism moved away from oratory as a primary object of study” (7), which indicates the influence of social and political movements.

The different perspectives of the supporters of expanding the American canon and those of the conservatives have led to diverging definition of the literary canon

⁸ There were early trends in the 1920s and 1930s to study the American frontier in the American canon. These trends were aiming to distinguish American literature from English literature (Csicsila 12-13). However, these trends almost exclusively focused on Anglo-American literary works.

and its formation in even though they have apparently shared perspectives.⁹ Some liberals argue for redefining the American literary canon and history by considering perspectives that reflect the diversity of American culture, in which canon makers “must . . . propose an endlessly proliferating diversity over which no school or theory, no ethnic, racial, or cultural enclave, and no political or scholarly party could ever again take control” (Kolodny, “Letting” 15). Following Kolodny’s approach opens ways to consider the multiculturalism of American culture. The present study calls for the inclusion of narratives by enslaved African American Muslims in American literature, which also reflects part of American multiculturalism.

Similarly, Cain’s article title “Opening the American Mind” obviously conveys an opposite position to Allan Bloom’s book *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987). Bloom is considered a conservative critic due to his support for the traditional American canon. Cain states that “[t]he American literary tradition that I was taught wasn’t just inadequate, it was *wrong*. The ‘tradition’ does not make coherent sense when African American writers are absent from it” (5). Cain draws attention to the fact that the traditional canon itself keeps changing with canonization of some nineteenth-century American writers, such as Herman Melville. He comments that “many very good writers and texts are now being rediscovered, and they have enlarged our conception of what literature, philosophy, and history encompass” (Cain 5). Henry Gates Jr. in his book *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* also argues for the inclusion of slave narrative in American literature. He declares that, “If we relinquish the ideal of America as a plural nation, we’ve abandoned the very experiment that America represents” (176). Arguably, this

⁹ Kolbas elaborates this argument in the first chapter of his book *Critical Theory and the Literary Canon*.

change in forming the canon is centrally related to the argument of defining literature. Focusing on works that have specific aesthetic and artistic values limits the definition of literature and therefore leads to production of a particular literary canon that marginalizes voices in American literature.

Critics disagree whether to consider African American slave narrative literature or not. Marion Wilson Starling in her dissertation (1946), later published as a book *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History* in 1981, states that the “primary significance” of slave narratives is their role as historical testimonies through picturing “the institution of slavery as seen through the eyes of the bondman himself” (294). Csicsila remarks that slave narratives were considered as historical documents rather than literary works by critics and scholars prior to 1969 when Arna Bontemps’s *Great Slave Narratives* discusses slave narratives from a literary perspective for the first time (169). Hemenway also believes that African American slave narratives are “unquestionably the first indigenous written literary genre America offered” (69). G. Thomas Couser argues that American literature started with life writing that documented American experiences, such as narrations that are related to exploration, conversion and captivity. Couser believes that the slave narrative among other:

early American literature also doesn’t seem “literary” to modern readers. The main reason is that little of it was what we now call “imaginative” writing—that is, poetry, drama, or fiction. Most of it was nonfiction. Some of it, being correspondence, was never intended

for publication; some of it, consisting of journals and diaries, was not even intended for interpersonal *communication*.¹⁰ (111)

However, in his article “‘I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature,” James Olney has a different definition of literature and slave narrative. He does not consider slave narratives, except Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845), as literature or autobiography. Olney defines literature as an imaginative act which does not match with slave narratives which try to present “slavery *as it is*” (48). He states that:

An autobiography or a piece of imaginative literature may of course observe certain conventions, but it cannot be only, merely conventional without ceasing to be satisfactory as either autobiography or literature, and that is the case, I should say, with all the slave narratives except the great one by Frederick Douglass. (65)

Even though Olney claims that Douglass’s *Narrative* is autobiography and literature, he still seems to be a modern reader, as Couser states above, who does not view the slave narrative as literature compared to modern literary genres. Olney, in fact, presents autobiography as a particular genre that is different from literature, by differentiating between “either autobiography or literature.” Autobiography, along with other life writings and many other literary genres, are under the umbrella of literature. The definition of literature should be broad and should not be limited to

¹⁰ See also Couser (125-126).

specific genres or literary texts that have particular artistic values, likewise Lauter's inclusion of Columbus's letters in *The Heath*.

This discussion of the concept of literature suggests that literary appreciation has changed over time. Cain states that Douglass's *Narrative* "complicates, qualifies, and sometimes undermines the themes of canonical writings by Emerson, Thoreau, and the other main figures of the American literary renaissance", which led to the failure to fully recognize the narrative in the American literary canon (11). However, Douglass's *Narrative* and other slave narratives, as Sarah Meer remarks in her essay, "Slave Narratives as Literature," are "now unquestionably literature, works of art; Douglass is at least a craftsman, and at most sublime; to recognize this is equated with challenging racism and promoting equal rights" (72). Meer also discusses the treatment of the slave narrative as literature and the differing meanings of the word "literature" throughout history. She believes that the intertextuality of slave narratives leads to the argument that they are literary works, stating "these narratives undeniably establish their positions in a larger textual world, and by so doing, indicate their sense of the value and power of the realm of books and their determination to belong to it. Their intertextuality told its own story" (82-83).

Meer's argument suggests that other slave narratives, such as narratives by enslaved African American Muslims, are literature too, even though her essay does not discuss them. Cain's experience is similar to mine in the discussion about the absence of enslaved African American Muslims from American literature. Including these writings can make literary traditions of slave narrative "coherent sense." The present study supports the necessity of providing a place for writings by enslaved Muslims in American literature. The rediscovery, critical discussion and analysis of

African American Muslim slave writings can enrich the field and change the critics' view toward these works as an important contribution in American literary history.

1.4 Enslaved African American Muslims and the American Literary Canon

Most studies on enslaved African American Muslims discuss the narrators and their writings from a socio-historical perspective. Douglas Grant's study on Ayyub ben Suleiman (Job ben Solomon) *The Fortunate Slave: Illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century* provides cultural, historical and geographical backgrounds of West Africa. Also, Terry Alford's biographical book on Abdr-Rahman *Prince Among Slaves*, Allan Austin's *Sourcebook* and Sylviane Diouf's study *Servants of Allah* are examples of studies that discuss enslaved African American Muslims from a socio-historical perspective. The main list of studies which approach enslaved African American Muslims from a literary perspective includes Ronald Judy's *(Dis)forming the American Canon: African-Arabic Slave Narratives and the Vernacular*, the editors Charles Davis and Henry Gates's collection *The Slave's Narrative*, Marc Shell and Werner Sollors's anthology *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations*, Ala Alryyes's *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said* and Safet Dabovic's dissertation "Displacement and the Negotiation of an American Identity in African Muslim Slave Narratives." Some of these studies, in particular Austin's, Dabovic's, and Alryyes's, argue in favor of inclusion of enslaved African American Muslims in the discussion of American literary history and African American literature. This argument has not yet had the desired effect, and as a consequence, the marginalization of enslaved African American Muslims from the American literary canon and American literature anthologies continues. Narratives by enslaved African American Muslims have not been discussed and taught

sufficiently in academies. Only two anthologies consider enslaved African American Muslim narrators among other American ethnic writers. These anthologies are Davis and Gates's collection *The Slave's Narrative* and *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations* edited by Shell and Sollors. The former includes an anonymous article about Ayyub, and the latter contains a copy and translation of Omar ibn Said's *Life*. This present study attempts to intensify this argument and advances the inclusion of enslaved African American Muslims.¹¹

1.4.1 Ayyub Ben Suleiman (Job Ben Solomon) (1702-1773)

Ayyub ben Suleiman Diallo, better known as Job ben Solomon was a son of a high priest from Senegal. He was kidnapped by his African enemy and sold as an enslaved person in the New World in 1731. He worked on a tobacco plantation in Maryland. He ran away and was captured and imprisoned. Ayyub's literacy in Arabic attracted the attention of the philanthropist James Oglethorpe who helped to free him. In 1733, Ayyub sailed to England and later returned to Africa. According to Ayyub's request, Thomas Bluett wrote *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job the Son of Solomon* (1734).

1.4.2 Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim (1762-1829)

Abdr-Rahman spent forty years in slavery. He was sixty-five-years old when he gained his freedom. Abdr-Rahman was born in Timbo in 1762. At the age of twenty-three, he was captured by his enemy's soldiers. They sold him to a ship captain and then he was taken to Dominica Island, then to New Orleans, and finally

¹¹ The rationale for selecting the following five narrators is mentioned in Chapter 2.

to Natchez. His master was Thomas Foster. Abdr-Rahman ran away, but after a couple of weeks, he returned to his master and later worked as an overseer. Abdr-Rahman married Isabella, an American-born Baptist enslaved woman and they had five children. One day, Abdr-Rahman met John Coates Cox, an Irishman, who Abdr-Rahman's father helped and provided hospitality when he got lost in Africa. Cox and his son had tried to buy Abdr-Rahman from his master, but the latter refused. Andrew Marschalk, a newspaper editor, asked Abdr-Rahman to write a letter in Arabic. The letter was received by the State Department and they thought that Abdr-Rahman was a Moroccan Prince, so the United States government agreed to send him to Africa after his master freed him in 1828. After that, Abdr-Rahman tried to raise fund to free his wife and children through visiting different American cities, such as Washington, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Baltimore, and New Bedford. Abdr-Rahman was able to free his wife, but not his children.¹² He left with his wife for Africa in 1829. After four months from his arrival, he died.

"The Unfortunate Moor" is the first biographical article on Abdr-Rahman,¹³ which was written by a lawyer and newspaper editor, Cyrus Griffin. *Abduhl Rahahman, The Unfortunate Moorish Prince* (1828) is his autobiography, which was formally written in Arabic and has been lost. The only remaining legacy is its English translation. Abdr-Rahman left other manuscripts, most of them are the first chapter of the Holy Quran. A lot of documents, such as articles, letters and

¹² Some of his children and grandchildren were freed after his death and joined with their mother and the grandmother in Liberia.

¹³ Dabovic states that it is Abdr-Rahman's first official slave narrative ("Displacement" 49).

diaries were written about him. Terry Alford's *Prince Among Slaves* gives extraordinary details of Abdr-Rahman's history.

1.4.3 Omar Ibn Said (1765-1864)

Omar ibn Said was born in 1765 in Futa Toro, Senegal. He was brought to South Carolina in 1807. Later he ran away from his master to North Carolina, where he was imprisoned. James Owen became his new master until the end of Omar's life in 1864. His autobiography, *The Life of Omar Ibn Said, Written by Himself*, is considered as "the only extant autobiography by an American slave in Arabic—a very legible, sixteen-page manuscript" (Austin, *Transatlantic* 129). Omar's *Life* was rediscovered in 1995. The appendix of the present study provides a copy of the *Life*. According to Austin, Omar wrote fourteen manuscripts in Arabic (*Transatlantic* 128). For instance, in 1831, Omar wrote two letters to Lamine Kebe. Also, he transcribed the Lord's Prayer, the Twenty-third Psalm, and some chapters from the Holy Quran. Many contemporary journalists and writers wrote about Omar.

1.4.4 Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua (1830-?)

Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua was born around 1830 in Djougou, a city in a country which is called today Benin. He did not like school. Mahommah had experienced African slavery and was released by his brother. However, later his friend tricked him by drinking until he became intoxicated and he eventually became an enslaved person in Brazil. Mahommah worked for different masters. His third master was a ship captain, who had a coffee shipment to New York in 1847. Mahommah seized the opportunity to escape from slavery. After that, he moved to Haiti with the help of American abolitionists. In Haiti, Mahommah met William L.

Judd, an American Baptist minister and a member of American Free Baptist Missionary Society, and then converted to Christianity. With the support of the Society, he moved to New York to study English at New York Central College in McGrawville so when he would return to Africa, he would work as a missionary. After three years, he left the college and then travelled to Canada. Mahommah could not go to Africa as a missionary and he left to England in 1857. No evidence is available regarding whether he returned to Africa or not.

Austin presents in his *Sourcebook* two documents concerning Mahommah; a document of his conversion to Christianity and the other one is *An Interesting Biography of Mahommah Baquaqua* (1854). Later in his book *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (1997), Austin mentions seven of Mahommah's letters. The editors of *The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America*, Paul Lovejoy and Robin Law, present 15 other letters which have been ascribed to Mahommah between 1848 and 1854.

1.4.5 Mohammad Ali Ben Said (Nicholas Said) (1836-1882)

Mohammad Ali Ben Said, better known as Nicholas Said, arrived in the United States in 1860s after he had gained his freedom. He was born in 1836 in Kouka the capital of Bornu, present-day Nigeria. Unlike the other enslaved African American narrators, Said did not experience American slavery. Instead he was an enslaved person and a servant in North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. However, after gaining his freedom, he decided to live the rest of his life in the United States, where he worked as a French language teacher for African American children. He showed his anti-slavery position through participation in the Civil War

in 1863 until the end of the war. Said's story was first published in 1867 under title the "A Native of Bornoo" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, "the most prestigious journal of that day" (Austin, *Transatlantic* 174). Said wrote *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said; a Native of Bornou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa*, which was published in 1873. It is about his travels in the five continents and, consisting of 224 pages, it is the longest autobiography by an enslaved African American Muslim. The *Autobiography* was rediscovered by Precious Rasheeda Muhammad who republished it in 2000. Said died in Tennessee in 1882.

1.5 Discussion of Exclusion of Narratives by Enslaved African American Muslims

Florence Marfo's article "African Muslims in African American Literature" directly addresses the exclusion of enslaved African American Muslims from mainstream American literature. Marfo discusses possible reasons that led commentators on African American literature to exclude these narratives from anthologies. These reasons are related to the questions of identity, as well as definitions and characteristics of the slave narrative genre.

Marfo's article focuses on the works of Omar, Mahommah, Ayyub, and Said. The first reason for the exclusion is the possibility that some of the narratives might have been written by Western writers. For example, Ayyub's *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* was written by Thomas Bluett. This leads to the claim that the narrative is not authentic enough and consequently does not convey the perspective of an enslaved person, because the writer is not the enslaved person himself. Marfo remarks that even though it was written by a European man, she considers the narrative "a fundamental step" in the slave narrative progression (1214). Add to this Bluett's indication of Ayyub's participation in writing the narrative which disproves

the claim that Ayyub was not involved in the writing process.¹⁴ Another important point here is that some slave narratives by non-Muslim African Americans were written by ghost writers or abolitionists, such as Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* which many critics claim was written by the abolitionist, David Wilson.

Echoing Marfo, Frances Smith Foster believes that Ayyub's narrative helps in the progress of anti-slavery literature as a genre. However, Foster does not consider it a slave narrative (33, 35). This raises a fundamental question regarding the definition of a slave narrative, which is at the center of this study's second chapter. Defining slave narrative plays an important role in including some narratives and excluding the others from the genre. Abdulhafeez Turkistani refers "sometimes 'loosely' to Muslim slaves' writings as slave narratives" (248). Turkistani further divides enslaved African American Muslim narratives into three categories: Arabic, translated, and English. According to Turkistani, Arabic narratives "are not subjective narratives or personal accounts of slavery" (256), whereas the "translated letters and biographies and autobiographies do present subjective narratives, but mainly of the slaves' African experiences" (262). The English narratives which were written by enslaved African American Muslims "are all subjective narratives about some aspects of the slaves' lives and are thus closer still to what we think of as slave narratives" (264).

This present study defines, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, writings by or related to enslaved African American Muslims as slave narratives focusing on biographical and autobiographical narratives. The study analyzes biographies and autobiographies for the sake of the comparison with the typical non-Muslim African

¹⁴ This point is discussed in Chapter 3.

American slave narrative. The study's definition of the slave narrative aims to give a wide scope as Nicole N. Aljoe does when she remarks that "definitions of the slave narrative will be most useful if they are sufficiently broad to accommodate the wide variety of styles, forms, and contexts in which the testimonies of slaves have historically appeared" (4).

Marfo's second reason for this exclusion is the nationality and identity of the author. Mostly, the early enslaved African Muslims and other African slave narrators were born in Africa. Some of them, after gaining their freedom, returned to Africa or moved to another country and died there. The commentators do not consider them as African Americans. In this vein, Jill Lepore draws attention to the difference between Abdr-Rahman and Douglass, since Abdr-Rahman was not interested in American citizenship. According to Lepore,

In any event, from his actions, it is certain that he never considered himself an American. Even after living most of his life in the United States and marrying an American-born woman, Abd al-Rahman [Abdr-Rahman] felt no loyalty to the Republic (and why should he?). Nor did he plan to remain an inhabitant of the American colony of Liberia; as he made clear immediately after his arrival in Africa, he planned to travel to the interior for a reunion with his brother, who had replaced their father as a powerful local ruler. (133)

In contrast, Mohammad Ali ben Said (Nicholas Said) lived the rest of his life in the United States, "fought in the Civil War, as a corporal and a sergeant in the 55th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Colored Infantry" (Al-Ahari 32); and wrote his narrative, *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said, A Native of Bournou, Eastern*

Soudan, Central Africa, in the United States. Nevertheless, he has not been considered in African American literature or as “American” citizen. Another example is Bilali Muhammad (Ben Ali). Despite his enslavement and death in Georgia, his “American patriotism in the war of 1812” (Austin, *Sourcebook* 7) and writing his manuscript, he has been excluded from the discourse of African American literary history.

The question of identity, in this context what constitutes American or African American, has always been discussed regarding canonization and making national anthologies. This question is not just restricted to the discussion of enslaved African American Muslims, but to other ethnicities and contemporary “American” writers, for instance Gertrude Stein and T.S. Eliot. Jahan Ramazani in his chapter “A Transnational Poetics” starts with a quotation from the American poet Gertrude Stein, “America is my country . . . and Paris is my home town” (23). Ramazani questions modern and contemporary poetry studies from a transnational perspective which is richer and more effective than the “mononational” perspective. He states that:

critics co-construct the national and ethnic identities of writer citizens, routinely issuing passports to T. S. Eliot, Mina Loy, W. H. Auden, Denise Levertov, and Sylvia Plath, for example, in the shape of footnotes, literary histories, and anthologies that claim them as “American” or “British.” (24)

Ramazani’s argument echoes that of Vincent Carretta, who studies early-enslaved narrators from a transatlantic approach. The comparative study in Chapter 3 provides further insights about this approach. Marfo believes that Muslims’ displacement is

part of their enslavement, “which reflects the entire system of American slavery” (1214). In keeping with the argument of contemporary “American” poets, early enslaved Muslims who lived and experienced slavery in the United States are telling part of American literary history.

The third possible reason for exclusion according to Marfo is that enslaved African Muslims wrote mostly personal narratives, unlike the non-Muslim African Americans whose narrator presents himself as an example of other enslaved fellows. Marfo comments that critics “tend” to depend on Foster’s “two principal forms” of slave narratives. These two forms are “an African American literary genre (the slave narrative or the fugitive slave narrative)” and “a variation of personal narrative tradition in American literature” (1214). Here, an enslaved Muslim narrator appears to present “himself as an ideal type” of the other rather than conveying his experience as an example of other fellow enslaved people (Marfo 1216). Slave narratives consist of different categories, as Philip Gould indicates (“The Rise” 13, 21). Slave narratives, especially early slave narratives, can be read as adventure stories, travel tales, and religious confessions, among other types of genres. Therefore, these “personal stories” should be categorized as belonging to the slave narrative genre.

Patrick Horn claims that the narratives by enslaved African American Muslims, such as by Omar ibn Said, Mahommah Baquaqua and Nicholas Said, did not get the attention of scholars “partly because they do not conform to the conventional forms and themes of nineteenth-century slave narratives, which continue to be perpetuated in critical literature about the slave narrative genre” (46). He adds that “the stories of these early ‘African [American] Muslims’ complicate

master narratives of American origins and provoke meaningful questions about cultural roots, religious beliefs, and national identities” (Horn 47). Therefore, the distinguishing characteristics of narratives of enslaved African American Muslims should not be disregarded. Instead, these characteristics should be considered to enrich the genre and study of the slave narrative.

Some critics claim that the absence of significant themes in the slave narrative from most writings by enslaved African American Muslims justifies the exclusion from anthologies. These themes, for instance, are the double quest for literacy and freedom and the horror experience of the Middle Passage. Regarding the quest for literacy, unlike the anthologized African American slave narrators, enslaved African American Muslims knew how to read and write Arabic before their enslavement. Enslaved African American Muslim narrators, such as Abdr-Rahman, Omar and Ayyub, provide their educational background at the beginning of their narratives. Almost all enslaved African American Muslims mention their educational background and some of their teachers’ names even before giving details about their families. Since literacy was considered by pro-slavery supporters as the key of humanity and freedom in the New World, these enslaved Muslims wanted to indicate their humanity to them.

It is important to consider the conditions of some enslaved African American Muslim narrators during the time they wrote their manuscripts. Some wrote their narratives while they were enslaved, which could provide an explanation for the absence of their plea for freedom. For instance, Omar and Bilali wrote their manuscripts during their enslavement, whereas Frederick Douglass, James William Charles Pennington, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and many other non-Muslim African

Americans wrote their narratives only after they gained their freedom. I believe that this represents what Stephen Butterfield in his book *Black Autobiography in America* (1974) calls a “double identity”: an enslaved Muslim narrator did not present a clear anti-slavery goal in his narratives to protect himself from punishment (20). Again, the uncommon characteristics of enslaved Muslim narratives should not be marginalized, instead they should be seen as a source to enrich the slave narrative study.

Marfo claims that the way critics have described enslaved African American Muslims, such as using the term of the “noble savage” or describing them as Arabs,¹⁵ “falls neatly within the racism of the inherited racial slavery that was practised in the United States, suggesting that in this respect at least such a narrator could be easily integrated into the slave narrative genre” (1216). A further fact that enslaved Africans were brought from different places and ethnicities, therefore stereotyping them under the term “Negro,” does not reflect the fact that their cultural background

¹⁵ This is because they were educated and writing in Arabic. Khaled A. Beydoun argues in his article “Antebellum Islam” (2014) one of the reasons for the absence of enslaved Muslims from legal scholarship in the antebellum period is that “Muslim identity was converted from a religious into a racial classification . . . The political struggles with the Barbary States and the Ottoman Empire led the state to construct Muslim identity in the exclusive image of Arab and Turkish identity” (6). It merits mentioning that William Lloyd Garrison, an abolitionist, in the preface to Douglass’s *Narrative* (1845) mentions Arabic as an African language. According to Garrison, an American sailor who was enslaved in Africa for three years “had lost all reasoning power; and having forgotten his native language, could only utter some savage gibberish between Arabic and English, which nobody could understand, and which even he himself found difficulty in pronouncing” (Douglass 5-6). Garrison was possibly influenced by the political struggle or by enslaved African American Muslims who were represented as Arabs.

differed.¹⁶ I think another reason, which is related to the slave narrative critics, is the mistranslations, misconceptions and misrepresentations of enslaved African American Muslim narratives which led commentators to exclude them from African American anthologies. Turkistani in his dissertation argues, with examples, that the lack of understanding of the Islamic culture and background of enslaved African American Muslims by contemporary and modern Western editors and critics has led to misconception and misrepresentation about these enslaved people (10-11). For instance, Omar uses “Qur’anic verses that can only be interpreted and comprehended by highly educated and religious persons” in order to convey his view on slavery (Shaheen 203).

Abolitionists, whose principles were inspired by Christianity, encouraged the spread of slave narratives.¹⁷ This led to strengthening the bonds between Christianity and the slave narrative. According to Marfo, this relationship between Christianity and the slave narrative results in another possible reason for excluding early narratives of Muslims from anthologies which do include Christian slave narratives. Commentators tend to choose the writings of enslaved Christians. Even though some enslaved African American Muslim narrators, such as Omar, Said, Abdr-Rahman and Mahommah, converted to Christianity, their conversion has been questioned. Horn remarks that instead of classifying narratives by enslaved narrators as Muslim or Christian, he “propose[s] that readers consider them more expansively as narratives of cultural syncretism, revealing difficult dialogues between competing

¹⁶ See also Marfo (1218).

¹⁷ Gould discusses the role of Christianity and the development of the slave narrative in his essay “The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative.”

religious faiths, generative dissonances between linguistic practices, and dialectical exchanges between formerly unimaginable cultural worlds” (47-48). More importantly, these enslaved African American Muslims wrote their narratives from their religious perspective in which they present similar messages to their Christian counterparts, even though some of these messages do indirectly criticize slavery.¹⁸

For instance, the Quranic Chapter 67, which Omar selects, contains a similar message¹⁹ to that found in Colossians (4:1), “Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven” (qtd. in Zanca 8). In the same vein, Basima Kamel Shaheen remarks that “[w]hile a similar theological orientation characterizes many Christian slave narratives, ibn Said’s (Omar) rhetoric is essentially non-evangelical” (201). However, both religions (Islam and Christianity) are Abrahamic and thus share similarities. Marfo provides an excellent example of Ayyub’s comparing himself to the prophet Joseph (Peace Be Upon Him), whose story deals with slavery. Ayyub, by selecting this religious figure and story, shows his interest in reflecting the similarities of the two religions.

A further possible reason, which Marfo does not consider in her article, for neglecting enslaved African American Muslim narratives is the language used. Many enslaved African American Muslims wrote manuscripts in Arabic or transliterated their mother languages into Arabic characters. Omar, Abdr-Rhaman, Ayyub, and Bilali all wrote testimonies in Arabic. This point deals with identity and American nationality, since language presents part of a person’s identity and nationality. The

¹⁸ Chapter 2 discusses enslaved African American Muslims narrators’ religious perspective toward slavery.

¹⁹ This is explained in Chapter 4 under the analysis of Omar’s *Life*.

argument of a national language concerned late eighteenth-century thinkers, such as Noah Webster. In this context, Lepore remarks that:

“A national language is a national tie,” Noah Webster had insisted in 1786, “and what country wants it more than America?” What country, indeed? Already larger and more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than any western European country, America in Webster’s lifetime tackled the problem of unifying itself as a nation by stirring nationalist sentiment. (5)

Later, Lepore adds that using “English literacy Americanized slaves as much as it emancipated them, in much the same way as, Webster hoped, it Americanized white Americans” (113). According to this claim, enslaved people who wrote narratives in languages other than English are not Americans. This argument raises issues of America as a multiethnic country. Alryyes discusses the question of language, and Arabic-writing and American literature in the introduction to Omar’s *Life*, stating that “[t]he American notion of multiculturalism has, if anything, given a twist to this belief, implicitly assuring us that “respect” for the many ethnic and racial cultures that compose the United States is compatible with English monolingualism and linguistic assimilation” (8). Wail S. Hassan agrees, in his book *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature* (2011), with Sollors and Shell in considering other ethnicities in American literature using comparative approaches in American literatures. Regarding Omar’s Arabic autobiography and American literature, Hassan comments that “[t]he national, in other words, is always already multiple and polyglot, and American literature, if by that we understand not restricted canon of old but totality

of American literature in all its ethnic and multilingual diversity is a prime example of that” (224). Similarly, Judy does not see through his discussion on Bilali’s narrative that “linguistic variance” is a problem to discuss inclusion of Arabic narrative in the American literary canon. He adds that the attempts of critics, such as Grant, Alford, Austin, and Gates, in translating writings of enslaved African American Muslims into English and including them in the discussion of the New World slave narrative indicate “the degree to which American cultural history is in fact a multilinear and multifilial affair” (Judy 23). Alryyes states that Omar’s autobiography “places Arabic in the linguistic map of America, making it an ‘American’ language” (27). *Arabic Slave Writings and the American Canon*, a website of a course, under the supervision of Jeffrey Einboden, at Northern Illinois University, is a step toward including the writings of enslaved African American Muslims in academics.

Beyond the argument of writing in English and being Americanized, themes of seeking literacy and the danger of being a literate enslaved person are important topics in the slave narrative no matter which language is concerned. For instance, regarding Abdr-Rahman, Lepore states that “[t]he southern response to Abd al-Rahman’s alliance with northern black abolitionists . . . placed the ‘Prince’ in a position not *less* threatening than that of free blacks literate in English, but *more* threatening” (130). A literate enslaved person disproves the Western justification for enslaving Africans. As Mr. Auld asserts to his wife to stop educating Douglass: “‘if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master’” (Douglass 44). I believe that enslaved African American Muslims conveyed part of cultural and social issues of American

experience, which is more important than the used medium, whether it is English, Arabic, Spanish or any other language. Besides, as mentioned above, including languages other than English in American literature reflects America's multilingualism. As Sollors states in the introduction to *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature*:

The disappearance of non-English texts written or published in the United States is a loss of more than antiquarian significance. Reading, rereading, studying, and discussing these works should bring about a much-needed reorientation in historical consciousness and, both in popular debates and in the specialized approaches of many academic fields, a contemporary understanding of the United States as a multilingual country. (10)

All the above mentioned reasons are not sufficient for marginalizing and excluding enslaved African American Muslims from American literary anthologies and the canon. Marfo ends her article stating that even though the commentators excluded the African American slave narratives, there “are some tentative grounds for including early narratives by Muslims within broader discussion of early narratives by non-Muslim slaves and the slave narrative genre” (1220). Other scholars, such as Austin, Sollors, Muhammad Al-Ahari and Dabovic, also favor including these enslaved Muslims in American literature. At present, similar to the past, American society consists of diverse ethnicities, and including these minorities' writings in American literary history and the American literary canon reflects the fact that American history is multiethnic. In addition, this inclusion gives a sense of relevance to American culture for these minorities. For instance, American Muslims

will know their legacy in literary history was established before American independence and not in the twentieth century with Malcolm X, as represented in some anthologies. Dabovic's study attempts to show enslaved African American Muslim narratives as part of American cultural history and part of the formation of American identity ("Displacement" 230). This present study builds on his advocacy.

Chapter 2: Defining Slave Narrative as a Genre in Light of Socio-Historical Background on Slavery in Narratives by Enslaved African American Muslims

Trans-Saharan or oriental slave trade started in West Africa before the advent of Islam in the seventh century. According to Ousmane Oumar Kane, poor documentation of the oriental slave trade compared to its transatlantic counterpart, has led to limited studies of the former slave trade (99). West African Muslims also were well familiar with slavery and some actually practiced it. For instance, some enslaved African American Muslims, such as Ayyub ben Suleiman, practiced slavery in their homelands prior to their own enslavement. Others, such as Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, had experienced slavery before their enslavement in the New World. Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim has been claimed by historians for participation in the Atlantic slave trade.

The titles of narratives by enslaved African American Muslims convey varied categories of life writings, for instance, Ayyub's *Some Memoirs*, Omar's *The Life*, Mahommah's *Biography*, and Nicholas Said's *The Autobiography*. Therefore, this chapter firstly discusses life writings and defines slave narrative as a genre. Secondly, the chapter analyzes narratives by enslaved African American Muslims from a socio-historical perspective, how their views and attitudes toward slavery were influenced by prior Islamic context and education. Such a socio-historical perspective can provide a new understanding of these writings and reinforce their inclusion in the American literary canon.

2.1 Genres of Life Writings: Defining Slave Narrative as a Genre

Autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, slave narratives, diaries, letters, captivity narratives and confession narratives are all genres that are considered among self-writings or life-writings. G. Thomas Couser states that “*life writing* has become the umbrella term used to refer to all nonfictional representation of identity” (24). Even though they differ in form, “they are united in being concerned with the identities of actual people” (Couser 33). However, some of these writings have been underestimated and not considered as literature, such as diaries, slave narratives, and memoirs compared to autobiography as a literary genre.²⁰ As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson clarify in their study, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*:

Early twentieth-century theorists installed this master narrative of “the sovereign self” as an institution of literature and culture, and identified a canon of representative self life writings. Implicit in this canonization, however, is the assumption that many other kinds of life writings produced at the same time have lesser value and were not “true” autobiography—the slave narrative, narratives of women’s domestic lives, coming-of-age and travel narratives, among others. (3)

Fortunately, the concept of “master narrative” changed after the mid-twentieth century. This period was, for instance, when the slave narrative started to be included in the American literary canon.

²⁰ See also Julie Rak’s article, “Are Memoirs Autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity” (306).

“Memoir,” “life” and “confession” had been used before the term “autobiography,” which has been first used in the eighteenth century. Even though critics have called Benjamin Franklin’s narrative “autobiography,” he himself titled his original narrative in French “memoirs” and the term *autobiography* was invented after his death (Couser 23). Mainly these genres, memoir, confession and life were used to signal “the writer’s focus on self-reference through speculations about history, politics, religion, science, and culture, and often involved developing a method of and vocabulary for self-study” (Smith and Watson 2). Following is a discussion of life-writing genres, biography, autobiography, memoir and slave narrative, and definition of the slave narrative as a genre.

Biography is a life story or history of someone. Smith and Watson state “[i]n biography, scholars of other people’s lives document and interpret those lives from a point of view external to the subject” (Smith and Watson 5). Therefore, this text requires the biographer to do research in order to write the narrative. A biographer is mostly the one who decides on the perspectives and topics that the biography contains. Many critics claim that biography is an external way to present someone even though a biographer may “incorporate multiple forms of evidence, including historical documents, interviews, and family archives, which they evaluate for validity” (Smith and Watson 6-7). The biographer explains from his or her point of view.

Autobiography has been considered the superior life-writing genre. A simple definition of autobiography is, as M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham define it, “a biography written by the subject about himself or herself” (26). Smith and Watson state that autobiography is “a record of self-observation, not a history observed by

others” (6). Even though autobiography is self-revelation, it is not limited to first-person narration. Some autobiographies are written in second and third-person narration. Henry Adams, for instance, wrote his autobiography in the third person.

It is important to take a look at Arabic autobiography since Arabic was an educational language of enslaved African American Muslims. Some of them left Arabic autobiographies and manuscripts in the New World. According to Smith and Watson, autobiography “became the term for a particular generic practice that emerged in the Enlightenment and subsequently became definitive for life writing in the West” (2). Dwight Reynolds declares, in the introduction to his book, *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, that “[t]he genre of autobiography was . . . established in the Arabic literary tradition no later than the early twelfth century, although the earliest examples of Arabic autobiography can be traced back at least as far as the ninth century” (2).

In his first chapter, “The Fallacy of Western Origins,” Reynolds argues that the genre of autobiography is not the invention of the modern West as some mid-twentieth century Western critics, such as George Gusdorf and Roy Pascal, claim. Reynolds cautions that this genre has not been studied deeply and that may be because of three reasons. The first reason is a claim of the rarity of this genre in Arabic, which some Arab and Western scholars believe, such as Edward Said, Stephen Humphreys, and Albert Hourani (26). The second reason is that the small number of texts “that have attracted scholarly attention have been presumed to be . . . anomalies rather than part of a literary genre or historical tradition” (27). The third reason is the influence of Misch and Rosenthal’s judgments that western autobiography is superior to its Arab counterpart because of “self-awareness” (28).

Reynolds quotes Charles Bushnell's words in the introduction to the latter's book, *University Library of Autobiography* (1918):

The wonderful "confession" of Saint Augustine created no school, was imitated by no successors until, some hundred years having passed, we begin to trace the rising culture of the Middle Ages. We then find the first autobiographical successors of Saint Augustine not among Christians, nor even among Europeans, but among the Arabic scholars of the Mohammedan Empire. (qtd. in Reynolds 29)

Reynolds's and Charles Bushnell's arguments suggest that the narratives by African American Muslims are not just historical documents, but also have value as literary works. This is due to the fact that literary texts were taught in West African schools during the period of the transatlantic slave trade as will be discussed later in this chapter. Reynolds also discusses biographical and autobiographical traditions in Arabic literature since the pre-Islamic period. This also will be discussed later on under the section of education in West Africa.

Unlike autobiography which discusses the entire life of the author, memoir presents a single dimension or "one moment or period of experience . . . and offered reflections on its significance for the writer's previous status or self-understanding" (Smith and Watson 3-4). Memoir combines characteristics of biographical and autobiographical genres. For instance, memoir can be about the narrator or a person that the narrator has some memories about. As Julie Rak states in her article, "Are Memoirs Autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity," "memoir has had unstable meanings that have floated between public and private, between

‘auto’ and ‘bio,’ and between literary discourse and what early theorists of autobiography sought to keep out of the genre, namely non-literary writing” (306).

Slave narratives are also life writings. Whereas some scholars believe that slave narratives are a unique genre, other critics claim that slave narratives do not belong to literature with only a few exceptions. These arguments rise due to issues concerning the slave narrative’s origin and authenticity. Slave narratives were written to fight the peculiar institution of slavery, therefore many critics believe that these slave narratives originated due to the institution of slavery and without this institution, the slave narrative would not have been written (Couser 120, Olney 48, Waters 35). In addition, some scholars limit the production of these narratives to the years prior to the Civil War. These scholars, such as Charles Davis and Henry Gates, Jr. state that “written and dictated testimonies of the enslavement of black human beings are what we mean by the phrase, ‘the slave’s narrative.’ . . . we have defined as a slave narrative only those *written* works published before 1865, after which time *de jure* slavery ceased to exist” (xii). Considering these characteristics of recounting, slave narratives can be considered as memoirs since they focus on representing one experience, slavery.

Regarding the slave narrative authenticity, the roles of colonizationists, slaveholders, and abolitionists claimed that there was control over the enslaved or former enslaved person in composing the narrative. Additionally, since the possibility that slave narratives were written by others, this leads to a claim that they do not convey inner self, which autobiography does, of the enslaved or ex-enslaved narrator. Consequently, these reasons lead James Olney, in his article “‘I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature,” which tackles the

argument of the slave narrative and the genre of autobiography, to claim that the slave narrative is not autobiography. He elaborates that the slave narrative depicts

an external reality, rather than a particular and individual life as it is known internally and subjectively. This means that unlike autobiography in general the narratives are all trained on one and the same objective reality, they have a coherent and defined audience, they have behind them and guiding them an organized group of “sponsors,” and they are possessed of very specific motives, intentions, and uses understood by narrators, sponsors, and audience alike: to reveal the truth of slavery and so to bring about its abolition. (52)

Similarly, Couser claims that the slave narrative is “self-life writing . . . but understandably, impersonal” (121). He reasons that the slave narrative was not written to reflect the “individual self-development” except the two narratives by Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass which “transcend[ed] the genre’s constraints” (Couser 121- 122).

However, many scholars study slave narratives as autobiographical writings. For instance, in her book *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History*, Marion Wilson Starling limits the definition of slave narrative to an autobiographical genre: “[a] group of autobiographical or semiautobiographical records of American Negro slaves, separately published in book form, preserved in records of the court and church, discovered in the files of periodical publications, or massed together in unpublished collections” (311). Similarly, in *Black Autobiography in America* Stephen Butterfield studies slave narratives, which were written 20 years prior to the

Civil War (6), as autobiographies (12, 29, 31). William Andrews's book *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* focuses on "the forms of the first-person retrospective prose narrative that came from the mouths or pens of American blacks" (19). Examples of these forms are spiritual narratives, confession narratives, captivity narratives and other different types of autobiographical writings discussed in Chapter 3. Echoing Andrews, Frances Smith Foster in her book *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives* defines the slave narrative as a first-person narration among other autobiographical writings but yet distinct (xxviii).

Robert Stepto in his book *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* writes that slave narrative "is really an umbrella term for many types of narratives, and that while all slave narratives are personal histories of one sort or another, personal histories are not always autobiographies" (xvii). Stepto elaborates his argument by stating that:

When a historian or literary critic calls a slave narrative an autobiography, for example, what he or she sees most likely is a first-person narrative that possesses literary features to distinguish it from ordinary documents providing historical and sociological data. But a slave narrative is *not* necessarily an autobiography. We need to observe the finer shades between the more easily discernible categories of narration, and we must discover whether these stops arrange themselves in progressive, contrapuntal, or dialectic fashion—or if they possess any arrangement at all. (6)

Stephto's study identifies three phases consisting of four types of narration in slave narratives. The first and the second phase are basic and consist of an eclectic narrative and an integrated narrative, respectively. The eclectic narrative is when a narrative contains varied documents, which were mostly written by white abolitionists and editors, in order to authenticate the tale of the enslaved person. The integrated narrative is more unified in form and the voice compared to the eclectic narrative.

The third phase has two types of narration, the generic narrative and the authenticating narrative. The generic narrative is when the tale of an enslaved narrator authenticates itself rather than documents. Stephto argues that this type of narrative is a "discernable genre," which is more related to the genre of autobiography, as an example. He classifies and discusses Douglass's *Narrative* as among the generic narrative, as autobiography. Regarding the authenticating narrative, a slave narrative is used as an authenticating document for other genres, such as novels and histories (Stephto 3-5). His study suggests that the slave narrative as a genre is related to and influenced by other genres, not just autobiographies. Similarly, Carver Wendell Waters claims in *Voice in the Slave Narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Solomon Northrup*, that defining "the slave narrative . . . [as] a particular category of autobiography is a simplification" (35). Waters defines the slave narrative "[i]n its narrowest sense . . . as the recollecting voice of a slave, and in its broadest sense as the re-creation of a self previously a slave but now co-extensive with its contemporary world" (35).

Henry Gates's *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* applies Afro-American vernacular, and African tricksters and

traditions in writings of African American writings. As an example, the signifying monkey, which refers to duality and double-meaning, is of African traditions in the writings of African Americans. Gates's theory suggests that the slave narrative can be interpreted through African traditions rather than depending on Western literary theories.²¹ He presents slave narratives as a distinctive genre of the "literature of the slave" (127).

A broadest definition of the slave narrative is by the editors Davis and Gates in *The Slave's Narrative*. They define slave narratives as the "attempts of blacks to *write themselves into being*" (xxiii). Generally, in the context of American literature, according to Davis and Gates's definition, slave narratives are all the writings that were done by or related to the enslaved and ex-enslaved African American, such as letters, diaries, biographies, autobiographies, semi-autobiographies, plantation records, testimonies, copies of religious texts and other documents. Therefore, all these writings by enslaved African American Muslims document their literacy, humanity and therefore their right to be free. These writings can be studied as a response of an enslaved Muslim who wrote his narrative against racist philosophies for justifying the institution of slavery from the perspective that "since I am literate and able to write, I am human and should be free." Muhammad Al-Ahari remarks that African American Muslim slave literature "consists of newspaper and journal articles, diary entries, letters, church and plantation records, American Colonization Papers, and occasional books" (11).

²¹ Gates's theory suggests that cultural and educational background of enslaved African American Muslims is important to understand and interpret their narratives instead of disregarding them from American anthologies.

My definition of African American Muslim slave narrative in this study includes biographical, autobiographical or semi-autobiographical testimonies written by or about enslaved African American Muslims who experienced slavery or wrote about their lives in America. In particular, my focus is on narratives by enslaved African American Muslims such as related to Ayyub ben Suleiman's *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* (1734), Omar ibn Said's *The Life of Omar Ibn Said, Written by Himself* (1831), Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim's *The Unfortunate Moorish Prince* (1828), Mahommah Baquaqua's *An Interesting Biography of Mahommah Baquaqua* (1854) and Mohammad Ali ben (Nicholas) Said's *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said; a Native of Bornou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa* (1873). This definition is more reasonable and consistent, particularly in analyzing, comparing and discussing the narratives by enslaved African American Muslims and the conventions and traditions of slave narrative as a genre. For instance, Abdr-Rahman copied the first chapter, *Alfatiha*, of the Holy Quran and Ayyub wrote three copies of the Holy Quran from his memory. However, the present study focuses on Abdr-Rahman's translated autobiography *The Unfortunate Moorish Prince* and Ayyub's *Some Memoirs*. From a literary perspective, the autobiography of Abdr-Rahman and the narrative of Ayyub are more likely to be compared to the genre of the slave narrative.

Furthermore, this study does not discuss other narratives by or related to Bilali Muhammad, Salih Bilali and Lamine Kebe. Bilali Muhammad's testimony, *Diary of Ben Ali*, is excerpts from the *First Fruits of Happiness* or commonly known as *Risala* of Ibn Abi Zayd Al-Qayrawani.²² This testimony is about Islamic practices such as ablution and prayer. The manuscript does not reveal the life or experience of

²² Al-Qayrawani's book was commonly circulated in West Africa as will be mentioned later in the section of education in West Africa.

its enslaved narrator or in other words it is not a subjective narrative as Abdulhafeez Turkistani claims (15). Despite Turkistani's claim of subjectivity, Bilali through writing this manuscript conveys his Islamic identity as he finds himself in writing down this text. This study supports, as Safet Dabovic believes, that narratives by or related to Bilali Mohammed, Salih Bilali, Lamine Kebe are slave narratives ("Displacement" iii). Again, it does not omit Bilali and other enslaved African American Muslims from inclusion in the American literary canon. Instead the study focuses on biographical and autobiographical narratives for the sake of the comparison of narratives by Muslims and non-Muslims.

Reynolds refers to Aldo Scaglione, a scholar who is impressed by the Arabic autobiography and its association with its European counterpart. Scaglione claims that since the Islamic texts share some characteristics with the Christian one, there are associations between their autobiographies (29). Reynolds advocates two actions that the European should take to cause a second look for "autobiography in world literature" (31). The first action is "to unearth the noncanonical elements subversively present in the current western canon and so recover or reemphasize these aspects of cultural diversity" (31). Modern critics believe that Augustine's *Confessions* are a fundamental work which has led to the emergence of the Western autobiography. However, the West got this work along with other Greek works from Arabic translations which were done during the Islamic civilization. The second action is to disregard literary conventions of "true" autobiography and study other non-Western autobiography. Reynolds's recommended actions also should be taken into account in the study of the slave narrative genre in order to consider other writings by enslaved American ethnicities.

2.2 Socio-Historical Background

Socio-historical background information is important to understand the narratives by enslaved African American Muslims and their attitude toward slavery. Therefore, the socio-historical approach provides a new understanding of these narratives and supports their inclusion in mainstream of American literature. The following part focuses on the concept of slavery from an Islamic perspective and provides a general background regarding education in West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

2.2.1 Slavery and Islamic Principles

Before the advent of Islam, pre-Islamic society depended on slavery to quite a large degree. Consequently, in the early years of the Islamic era, the practice of slavery was not abolished or directly questioned. An explanation for Islamic acknowledgment of slavery is that it did not make the society collapse, since slaves comprised an important social class²³ and economic sector in the pre-Islamic society (Al-Marzouqi “Personal”).²⁴ Even though Islam condones slavery,²⁵ it commands manumitting enslaved people in many situations and puts regulations in place that ensure the enslaved person’s humanity and dignity is protected.²⁶ These commands

²³ See Fadhel Al-Ansari (41).

²⁴ Dr. Hassan Al Marzouqi is the Chair of the Islamic Studies Department at United Arab Emirates University.

²⁵ Sultana Afroz believes that “Islam accepted slavery as only a transitional institution between war and eventual peace in view of political and socio-economic constraints, rather than being prescribed” (97).

²⁶ Many historians and scholars argue that Islam does not limit or try to abolish slavery. William Gervase Clarence-Smith’s book *Islam and The Abolition of Slavery* reviews different scholars’ opinion about Islam and the practice of slavery. He

are communicated through many Quranic verses which call for “freeing a neck,” i.e. emancipating enslaved people.²⁷ Also, hadiths and Prophet Muhammad’s (Peace Be Upon Him) attitude, *Sunnah*, toward enslaved people provide important evidence of their rights and the true Islamic principles toward slavery.

Arguably, Islamic law wanted the process of abolishing slavery to be a “gradual” act (Al-Marzouqi “Personal”)²⁸ leading the society to change its view of slavery, by viewing enslaved people as brothers and sisters more than servants. Abu Baker J. Al-Jazaeri, the author of the book *The Muslim’s Approach: Book of Creeds, Manners, Behavior, Worships, and Dealings*, interprets the reason why Islam did not make slavery illegal from the outset. He believes that it would have been unreasonable to abolish slavery, as enslaved people were considered part of one’s property, and states that “Islam came to preserve one’s life, property and honor.” He adds another reason that it would not have been advantageous for some enslaved people at that time to be freed, especially female, young, and old slaves, who had shelter and food in their Muslim masters’ houses (my trans.; 453).

identifies enslaved people in Islamic law (sharia) as “chattels, similar to livestock in many respects, and yet they possessed certain carefully circumscribed rights, arising from their undeniable humanity” (2). Pal Fodor’s definition is less equivocal and does not liken enslaved people to livestock and defines “a slave under Islam is not a mere movable property, but a human being with certain, albeit very limited, rights” (xii).

²⁷ “Freeing a neck” is mentioned six times in the Holy Quran; (5: 89), (58:3), (90: 13) and three times in the same verse (4:92). However, the mentioning of enslaved people is not limited to this phrase alone and there are some other terms and phrases that refer to slaves. An example of these terms is “Alryqqab,” in bondage, which is mentioned in verses e.g. (2:177) and (9:60) and an example of a phrase that refers to enslaved people is “Ma Malakat Aymanikum,” what your right hands possess, e.g. in verses (4:36) and (24:33).

²⁸ See also Al-Ansari (47-48, 50) and Sultana Afroz (99-102).

Islam's call for manumitting in general as in the Holy Quran (90:13), puts manumitting enslaved people as expiations for committing sins. Examples of these sins are: *al-zihar*—neglecting of a wife as a form of divorce, killing someone by mistake—accidental or unintended killing, and breaking an oath. Therefore, freeing an enslaved person is the first choice for a Muslim to seek forgiveness for the sin of *al-zihar* (58:3) or killing someone by mistake (4:92). The second choice for expiation of *al-zihar* if a man cannot free an enslaved person is he, “must fast for two successive months before they [he and his wife] both touch each other. And he who is unable to do so, should feed sixty *Masakin* [poor people]” (58:4).²⁹ Regarding the other choice for expiation of the sin of killing a person by mistake is “[a]nd whoso finds this (the penance of freeing a slave) beyond his means, he must fast for two consecutive months in order to seek repentance from Allah” (4:92). For the sin of breaking an oath,³⁰ emancipating an enslaved person is the second choice after feeding

ten *Masakin* (poor persons), on a scale of the average of that which you feed your own families, or clothe them; or manumit a slave. But

²⁹ For translated Quranic verses, I use Muhammad M. Khan and Muhammed T. Al-Hilali's *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language: A Summarized Version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir with Comments from Sahih Al-Bukhari*.

³⁰ In Islam, if a person swears or vows to do a forbidden act, i.e. not fasting in Ramadan, or an act that would harm himself/ herself, he/ she must break the oath and do the expiation. As the Prophet revealed, “Whoever vowed to be obedient to Allah, must be obedient to Him; and whoever vowed to be disobedient to Allah, should not be disobedient to Him” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 83 num. 6700). In another hadith, he said: “By Allah, if anyone of you insists on fulfilling an oath by which he may harm his family, he commits a sin, with Allah, greater than that of dissolving his oath and making its expiation with that which Allah has commanded” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 83 num. 6625).

whoever cannot afford (that), then he should fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths when you have sworn. . . . And protect your oaths (i.e. do not swear much). . . . Thus Allah makes clear to you His *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) that you may be grateful. (5:89)

The first choice of expiations of these sins illustrates the importance of serving the community, helping the needy and freeing enslaved people, which serves more than just the individual but the society as a whole.

In almost all instances where enslaved people are mentioned, including their emancipation, no distinction is made between believers and non-believers. In fact, in only one Quranic verse is the subject of an enslaved person's belief mentioned, with reference to when a person kills somebody by mistake:

It is not for a believer to kill a believer except (that it be) by mistake; and whosoever kills a believer by mistake, (it is ordained that) he must set free a believing slave and a compensation (blood-money, i.e. *Diya*) be given to the deceased's family unless the remit it. If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is prescribed); and if he belonged to a people with whom you have a treaty of mutual alliance, compensation (blood-money -- *Dyia*) must be paid to his family, and a believing slave must be freed. And whoso finds this (the penance of freeing a slave) beyond his means, he must fast for two consecutive months in order to seek repentance from Allah. And Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise. (4:92)

This general, unspecified emancipation is an indication that Islam attempts to limit the practice of slavery among people whether they were believers or not.

Another example for fostering the practice of manumitting enslaved people is, as Islamic law puts it, one of the pious deeds that Muslims can do, which allows a person to be devout to Allah. Abu Dhar, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad–PBUH, asked the Prophet,

“What is the best kind of manumission (of slaves)?” He replied, “The manumission of the most expensive slave and the most beloved by his master.” I said, “If I cannot afford to do that?” He said, “Help the weak or do good for a person who cannot work for himself.” I said, “If I cannot do that?” He said, “Refrain from harming others for this will be regarded as a charitable deed for your own good.” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2518)

This Hadith reveals that the act of manumitting enslaved persons is better than some other charitable deeds. Actually, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) acknowledged the deed of Hakim bin Hizam who

manumitted one-hundred slaves in the Pre-Islamic Period . . . and slaughtered one-hundred camels (and distributed them in charity). When he embraced Islam he again slaughtered one-hundred camels and manumitted one-hundred slaves. Hakim said, “I asked Allah’s Messenger . . . , ‘O Allah’s Messenger! What do you think about some good deeds I used to practise in the Pre-Islamic Period . . . regarding them as deeds of righteousness?’ ” Allah’s Messenger . . .

said, “You have embraced Islam along with all those good deeds you did.” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2538).

Islam also puts regulations with respect to owning enslaved persons which are based on good treatment and equality. Regarding the methods of enslaving people, Islamic law forbids a Muslim from enslaving another Muslim or enslaving a free person.³¹ Also, a free person cannot be a slave because of debt under Islamic law, which was a common act in the pre-Islamic period (Fodor xii). It permits the enslavement of prisoners of war, who were actively involved in fighting on the side of the enemy.³² Importantly, only in a legitimate war³³ were they taken captives.

³¹ The Prophet said:

“Allah says, ‘I will be an opponent to three types of people on the Day of Resurrection:

1. One who makes a covenant in My Name, but he proves treacherous;
2. One who sells a free person (as a slave) and eats his price; and
3. One who employs a labourer and takes full work from him but does not pay him for his labour.’” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 37 num. 2270)

³² Even in these circumstances, sometimes they were not immediately enslaved. Al-Ansari discusses that taking prisoners was not based upon a constant ground (50). For example, the Prophet took prisoners as enslaved people from Banu Qurayiza, a Jewish group in Al Madina, when they broke a treaty with Muslims (see also Clarence-Smith 34). However, the Prophet did not capture or take prisoners in “Fateh Makkah”, The Conquest of Makkah. Afroz also provides other evidence for emancipation of war captives of the Battles of Bader and Hunain as well as other instances during the Caliphs’ reign (101).

³³ Abdel Asalam Al-Trmanini, in his book *Slavery: Its Past and Present*, clarifies the legitimate Islamic war in which Muslims can take prisoners of war. Firstly, Muslims must not fight people before presenting Islam and giving them an opportunity to embrace it. Then, if the latter refuses Islam, but they agree in not attacking Muslims, they are asked to pay tributes, *jizyaa*, and Muslims should protect them. However, if they refuse Islam and insist on fighting Muslims, here the fight is legitimate (my trans.; 42-43). See also Sylviane Diouf (*Servants* 27).

They could be free if they paid for their freedom. The Quranic verse (47:4) also gives the chance for prisoners to be set free:

So, when you meet (in fight- *Jihad* in Allah's Cause) those who disbelieve, smite (their) necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, i.e. take them as captives). Thereafter (is the time) either for generosity (i.e. free them without ransom), or ransom (according to what benefit Islam), until the war lays down its burden. Thus [you are ordered by Allah to continue in carrying out *Jihad* against the disbelievers till they embrace Islam and are saved from the punishment in the Hell-fire or at least come under your protection], but if it had been Allah's Will, He Himself could certainly have punished them (without you). But (He lets you fight) in order to test some of you, with others. But those who are killed in the way of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost

Regarding the humane treatment of enslaved people, the Prophet said a number of things that clearly break the boundaries in the master/slave relationship and call upon the faithful firstly to "feed them [enslaved people] with the like of what one eats and clothe them with the like of what one wears." Secondly, those with enslaved people "should not overburden them with what they cannot bear, and if you do so, help them (in their hard job)." Indeed the Prophet stated unambiguously: "[y]our slaves are your brethren upon whom Allah has given you authority" (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2545). As Sultana Afroz has observed "Islam admonished the masters to be fair and good in their dealings with slaves - with the ultimate aim of

having no distinction between master and slave” (103). She adds that “the true relationship between the master and his slave was not one of slave and overlordship, nor of subjection or objection but that of kinship and brotherhood” (103-104). However, the violation of Islamic principles is a reason why slavery continued in the Islamic world, in particular because slavery had been associated with political and economic purposes.

More evidence of this can be found in another hadith where the Prophet emphasized treating enslaved persons as family members. He said:

“You should not say, ‘Feed your lord (*Rabbaka*), help your lord in performing ablution, or give water to your lord’ [*sic*] but should say, ‘My master (e.g. Feed your master instead of lord etc.) (*Saiyidi*)’, or ‘My guardian (*Maulai*)’, and one should not say, ‘My slave (*Abdi*)’, or ‘My girl-slave (*Amati*)’, but should say, ‘My lad (*Fatai*)’, ‘My lass (*Fatati*)’, and ‘My boy (*Ghulami*).’” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2552)

Again, using such titles helps to create a family relationship (e.g., a father/ son) more than a master and slave relationship.³⁴ The relationship appears for a modern reader to be idealized. However, it was such a difference for those who experienced pre-Islamic slavery system compared to its early Islamic counterpart.

In terms of mistreating enslaved people in an inhumane way, the Prophet said, “He who beats his slave for no reason, or slaps him, his expiation is to free him” (Muslim; bk. 20 num. 901). A number of verses mention the rights of enslaved

³⁴ More evidence relating to the humane treatment can also be found in the Quranic verse (4:36).

people, for example, in the Holy Quran (90:60) the merit of “freeing captives” is mentioned; Allah says:

As-Sadaqat (here it means *Zakat* [Alms]) are only for the *Fuqara'* (poor), and *Al-Masakin* . . . (the poor) and those employed to collect (the fund); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free captives; and for those in debt

Muhammad Khan and Muhammed Al-Hilali translate the phrase “*fi AlRyqqab*” as “*to free captives*,” while some others, such as Yusuf Ali, translate the phrase as “for those in bondage.” What is of most importance is that the Quranic verses call for proper treatment of enslaved people. The latter’s translation is arguably a more literal one compared to Khan and Al-Hilali’s. The phrase, “for those in bondage,” conveys enslaved people’s right to be given from alms.

An example of Islamic equality and justice with enslaved people during the Prophet’s life is that of Bilal bin Rabah, a former African enslaved person. He was freed by Abu Baker Al Siddiq, one of the companions of the Prophet and the first Caliphate. The Prophet appointed Bilal to be a prayer caller, *muezzin*, which indicated the principle of Islam to demolish the racial and social discriminations which were a feature of the pre-Islamic society. After the death of the Prophet, he stopped being a prayer caller. When Abu Baker Al Siddiq asked Bilal to return to his former position of prayer caller, Bilal declined and told Abu Baker if he had freed him for his own benefit then he would do what he asked for, and if Abu Baker had freed him for seeking the pleasure of Allah, then Abu Baker should let Bilal be free to decide. Abu Baker confirmed that he freed him for Allah. Two important points related to early Islamic attitudes toward slavery can be understood from these two

incidents from Bilal's life. The first point is the Prophet's appointment of a former slave to carry out such an important task. The second point is that the practice of manumission is not for personal gain, but Islam tells people it is the right thing to do.

A further example of the Prophet's companions' attitude toward the subject of slavery is the reaction of the second Caliphate, Omar ibn Al Khatab, when the son of Amer bin Alass (one of the companions of the Prophet and the governor of Egypt) beat a Christian Egyptian. His famous statement, "since when do you enslave people and their mothers bore them free?" reflects the common Islamic perception that all people are in fact equal. This is because slavery may convey a message that contradicts the equality which Islamic law calls for, e.g. the Prophet's saying "O people, your God is one God, and your father is one father. All mankind is the progeny of Adam, and Adam was fashioned out of clay" (Manna183), and from the Holy Quran:

O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each another. Verily the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has *At-Taqwa* [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqun* (the pious. See V.2:2)]³⁵ []. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (49:13)

Only one hadith recommends an enslaved person to not rebel against his owner. "Goodness and comfort are for him (the slave) who worships his Lord (Allah) in a perfect manner and serves his master sincerely" (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2549).

³⁵ The translators state that "*Al-Muttaqun* [are] [the pious and righteous persons who fear Allah much (abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden) and love Allah much (perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained)]" (11).

Although this hadith seems to ask the enslaved person to submit to his master, we still can conclude that Islam is trying to emancipate the enslaved person. Considering this hadith along with the other previously discussed hadiths and Quranic verses, concerning the good treatment for enslaved people and manumitting as a rewarding deed, they all call for freeing enslaved people. Here Islam deals with both masters, on the one hand, and enslaved people on the other one. Islam rewards the Muslim master for good treatment or manumitting and rewards the enslaved person for being faithful to his master. A possible earthly reward is to be freed by the master. A further understanding of this hadith is that Islam attempts to make the relationship between an enslaved person and master more harmonious so as to reflect the larger community peace. Afroz states that “[t]he advent of Islam initiated the restoration of human dignity to mankind and gave a deathblow to the perpetual serfdom of the slaves and to the institution of slavery as a source of economic labor” (98).

In general, the Islamic principles, laws and regulations attempt to limit the practice of slavery. This occurred through narrowing sources of enslaving captives and widening ways to free slaves. In addition, it is also apparent that Islamic principles attempt to protect an enslaved person in the Muslim master-slave relationship. To follow Islamic principles of slavery could consequently lead to the abolition of slavery. However, the practice of slavery had been aggravated over time due to some violations of the Islamic principles of slavery. Some customs and traditions are falsely ascribed to the Prophet and Islamic law. Additionally, the political and economic factors also helped the practice of slavery to continue. Concerning West Africa, political and economic intentions of “the corruptions and injustice of the local rulers” helped the transatlantic slave trade to intensify (Diouf, “God” 179).

Paul E. Lovejoy in his book *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* claims that the “instability” which resulted from political issues in the period of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries created a suitable environment for the practice of slavery (68). Many historians claim that during Usman Dan Fodio’s reign, who was a scholar and the founder of Sokoto Caliphate, slavery increased because of *jihad*, holy wars which spanned from 1804 to 1808. During that time, Muslims practiced enslavement over other Muslims; even though in Islam it is not allowed to enslave a free Muslim.³⁶ *Jihad* was launched against enslavement of Muslims that was practiced in Hausaland. For instance, arguably the enemy that attacked Omar ibn Said’s country, which ended with many deaths and his enslavement in 1807, consisted of Muslims.³⁷ Prior to Omar’s enslavement, Allan Austin claims that Ayyub ben Suleiman, a Muslim Fulbe or Fula, was taken captive by other Muslims, Mandingoes, who were his enemies in 1731. “Their shared religion did not help his case,” Austin writes (*Sourcebook* 32).

A significant point here is that not all the states were Muslim even though they were within the Islamic government or belonged to an Islamized ethnicity, such as Mandingoes. Therefore, there is a distinct possibility that the wars were actually between Muslims and non-Muslims. For example, Austin states in his chapter on Omar ibn Said that the war, in which he was captured, “probably . . . [involved] the anti-Muslim Bambaras from Kaarta to the northeast or just from Massina to the

³⁶ See also Diouf (*Servants* 30).

³⁷ The historian Michael Gomez in his article “Muslims in Early America” refers to Austin’s estimation that the “big army” which attacked Omar’s village was “probably a reference to the combined armies of Bundu, Kaarta, and Khasso, who invaded Futa Toro in 1806-1807” (690- 691). Earlier in the same article, Gomez states that by the nineteenth century Bundu “became predominantly Muslim” (677).

southeast” (*Transatlantic* 134). Similarly, Sylviane Diouf, in her article “‘God Does Not Allow Kings to Enslave Their People’: Islamic Reformists and the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” believes that the “big army” was not Muslim, and came from “Bambara Kingdom of Kaatra” (162). In fact, Omar mentions that they were “infidels” in his autobiography (Ibn Said 77).

Nevertheless, these customary activities do not deny the fact that there were strong Muslims who applied Islamic law.³⁸ According to Ousmane Kane, “from the eighteenth century on, clerical classes rose in various parts of the Bilad al-Sudan to challenge the moral bankruptcy of West African societies, of which slavery and political oppression by ruling classes were the most visible manifestations” (105). Usman Dan Fodio³⁹ and his son Mohammad Bello were influenced by Islamic legal works that dealt with slavery. Makhluḥ al-Balbali and Ahmad Baba were African scholars who wrote works, “authoritative fatwas,” that discuss the debate of slavery (Kane 94). Lovejoy, in his essay “Slavery, the Bilad Al-Sudan, and the Frontiers of the African Diaspora,” states that the “principles of slavery that derived from” Ahmad Baba were taught in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in West Africa (12). Similarly, Bruce Hall and Charles Stewart, in their essay “The Historic ‘Core Curriculum’ and the Book Market in Islamic West Africa,” remark that Baba’s book *Miraj al-Suud ila Nayl Hukm Majlub Al-Sudan* (1614) which discusses “the illegitimacy of enslaving West African Muslims, is relatively widespread” (136).

³⁸ Diouf and Turkistani believe that most West African Muslims who were enslaved in the Americas were strong believers. Gomez also refers to this point in his article “Muslims in Early America” (703).

³⁹ However, Nicholas Said presents Usman Dan Fodio as a demolisher in wars, who ruined cities and enslaved his enemy’s women and children (8).

However, Kane is uncertain of “how widely this specific fatwa circulated in Bilad al-Sudan or to what extent it affected practices of slavery” (105).

Diouf, Lovejoy and Kane⁴⁰ have quoted Ahmad Baba’s words in their studies concerning the topic of West African slavery. Baba argues that “there was no difference between the human races in the Qur’an, and that even if Ham was the father of the Sudanese, God was too merciful to make millions of men pay for the mistake of one” (Diouf, *Servants* 15). Lovejoy quotes part of Ahmad Baba condemnation of the Hausa for leading wars against Muslims and enslaving them:

Sometimes there is disharmony among the chiefs of these lands and one *sultan* might march against another, and invade his country and capture whatever he can from the other followers, who are Muslims, and he sells the prisoners although they are free Muslims. Alas! This is much practiced among them. (qtd. in Lovejoy, *Transformations* 74)

Baba’s principles of slavery are strongly influenced by Islamic principles.

In her first chapter, “African Muslims, Christian Europeans, and the Atlantic Slave Trade,” Diouf discusses the Islamic West African slavery system. The discussion suggests that the slavery system in West Africa was not much different from what Islamic law had commanded toward the subject of slavery (*Servants* 27). The above discussion leads one to suggest that West African Muslims were somewhere between following and violating the Islamic principles of slavery whether due to customary, political or economic factors. Some African rulers saw

⁴⁰ Kane also discusses Baba’s point of view of the mythology of Noah curse. Baba believed that this mythology is “something not proven and is not correct” (qtd. in Kane 104).

selling criminals to the Western slave traders as more beneficial than killing them (Diouf, *Servants* 26). The question raised here is how West African Muslims who experienced slavery in the colonial or American system dealt with it, in terms of what they previously knew about slavery.

According to Diouf, the European slavery system was different from the Islamic West African slavery system. Unlike the Islamic enslaving method which was mainly enslaving war captives, the Europeans enslaved people through kidnapping and straight purchase (26). West African slavery tended to be more sensitive toward maintaining the family unit than colonial and American slavery. Diouf mentions that enslaved African people either lived together with their families in slave communities or with their masters' families. Besides working with their masters, African slaves had their own work. There also tended to be less distinction between enslaved and free people in most West African contexts. Diouf quotes surprised expressions of two European observers to the African slavery system:

Francis Moore noted in the 1730s that “some of the Negro [in Gambia] have many house slaves, which are their greatest glory; those slaves live so well and easy, that it is sometimes a hard matter to know slaves from their masters and mistresses.” . . . In Senegal, noted another European, they were “treated so well, eating with their masters, working along with them, and being as well clothed . . . that is impossible to distinguish them from free men.” (*Servants* 27; 2nd ellipsis in original)

Such treatment of enslaved people reflected exactly fits in with the Prophet's saying that commanded Muslim masters treat their enslaved people as their brothers and

they “should feed them with the like of what one eats and clothe them with the like of what one wears. You should not overburden them with what they cannot bear, and if you do so, help them (in their hard job)” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2545). However, the European and American slavery system was different since enslaved people were used mostly for economic purposes. Enslaved people worked on sugar, tobacco, cotton, and rice plantations. John Blassingame describes in detail his book *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* the experiences and problems that faced male and female enslaved people and how vulnerable the family unit was under threat due to separation and selling to different slaveholders. Blassingame states that “[a]n overwhelming majority of the couples were separated before they reached their sixth anniversary. The heartlessness of the planters is revealed more clearly in their separation of the slaves who had lived together for decades” (177).⁴¹

2.2.2 Education in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries West Africa

In the first chapter of her book *Servants of Allah*, Diouf speaks about the position of literacy among African Muslims. African Muslims learn Arabic since it is the language of the Holy Quran. They needed it “to understand the religion and to guide them in their daily life” (23). Diouf discusses the popularity of schools and the provision of education for girls unlike the European cultures in that time. In addition, many non-Muslims joined Islamic schools, to be literate. Most West Africans were educated. A French traveler “estimated that 60 percent of all Senegalese” were able to read and write in Arabic (Diouf, *Servants* 25). By the end of the nineteenth

⁴¹ It was not until the 1840s that voices against slave family separation increased (Blassingame 174-175).

century, there were about 3000 schools in Futa Jallon (Guinea), Abdr-Rahman's homeland, and 25,000 schools in northern Nigeria (Diouf, *Servants* 25). Timbuktu in Mali has been considered as a prominent learning and intellectual center.

Lamine Kebe (around 1780-?), about whom Austin subtitled the chapter "Professor Without Class" in his *Sourcebook*, was an enslaved African American Muslim who was a teacher before his enslavement. Theodore Dwight, the founder of the American Ethnological Society and a member of the American Colonization Society (ACS), wrote four articles about Kebe. One of Dwight's articles was an interview with Kebe. Kebe provided information about African geography, history, schools and education. According to Dwight, Kebe told him to "[w]rite down what I tell you exactly as I say it, and be careful to distinguish between what I have seen and what I have only heard other people speak of. They may have made some mistakes; but if you put exactly what I say, by and by, when good men go to Africa, they will say, Paul [his American Name] told the truth" (qtd. in Austin, *Transatlantic* 119). African Muslim schools were not just for learning Arabic and memorizing the Holy Quran. Kebe mentioned a list of 100 books that were used in African school. There were 14 books in Arabic and the rest of the texts were in Kebe's local language transliterated into Arabic characters (Austin, *Transatlantic* 122).

Kane in his recent book *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* remarks that performing Islamic pilgrimage, *Hajj*, played a role in knowledge transmission to Islamic West Africa. He writes that "West African Muslims performing the pilgrimage to Mecca [Makkah] typically spent time in Egypt to study with Egyptian ulama" (79). In addition to the pilgrimage, trades and travels in search of knowledge had helped West African Muslims to connect with

intellectuals which subsequently enrich West African schools with Islamic and Arabic texts and literature. Omar and Nicholas Said mention their pilgrimages in their narratives. As mentioned above, West African intellectuals, such as Ahmad Baba (1556–1627) and Usman Dan Fodio (1754– 1817), did also produce Islamic texts.

Kane states that “Islamic studies in West Africa started at the Qur’anic school, where pupils as young as four were admitted and taught to memorize the Qur’an and write in Arabic script. . . . Successful completion of Qur’anic studies paved the way to what we call higher Islamic studies, in which advanced students were taught a wide variety of subjects” (10). Many enslaved African American Muslims left manuscripts consisting of Quranic verses, such as Abdr-Rahman, Omar, Ayyub ben Suleiman and Bilali Muhammad, while Mahommah left three Arabic words in one of his letters.⁴² Bruce Hall and Charles Stewart have made a magnificent effort in identifying the core curriculum in Islamic West Africa throughout the period 1625 to 1925. Using an online database, Arabic Manuscript Management System (AMMS), which has over than 23,000 West African Islamic manuscripts, Hall and Stewart classify the subjects into six clusters, which are Quranic studies, Arabic language, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), theology, Sufism and legal studies (111-112). “This ‘core curriculum’ includes a wide range of material: at one end are the texts available to advanced scholars and described in their own writings, and at the other, the core didactic texts studied by all aspiring students” (Hall and Stewart 113). Kane, in chapter four of his book, discusses subjects and texts that were used and circulated in Islamic West Africa. He lists the

⁴² His Arabic words are discussed later in this chapter.

central subjects of Islamic education in West Africa as “the Quran and related sciences; legal studies; hadith, *sira*, and devotional poetry; theology; Sufism; Arabic language; . . . African language lexicology” (76).

Examples of well-known texts, mentioned by Hall, Stewart and Kane,⁴³ are *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn* by Al-Mahalli and Al-Suyuti which deals with *tafsir*, exegesis, and Ibn Al-Barri’s poems *al-Durar al-lawami* and Ibn al-Jazari’s *al-Muqaddima* both of which deal with *tajwid*, the art of recitation. Both *tafsir* and *tajwid* belong to the subject of Quranic sciences (Hall and Stewart 118). Works that are related to legal studies, theological treatises, are *Risala* by Ibn Abi Zayd Al-Qayrawani and Khalil b. Ishaq’s *Mukhtasar*, which were “the most widely copied in West Africa” (Hall and Stewart 133). As has been mentioned above, Bilali Muhammad’s manuscript is part of Al-Qayrawani’s *Risala*. Regarding hadiths, the collections by Muslim and Al-Bukhari are mostly ones circulated in the region followed by the collection of Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Nasa’i and Ibn Maja (Kane 85). This may support the possibility that enslaved African American Muslim narrators had accessed and memorized some hadiths concerning slavery.

The works of *sira*, biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and devotional poems, *madh*, could also be considered as a literary influence on enslaved African American Muslims, concerning, for instance, literary forms and writing styles. Regarding *sira*, Kane states that:

⁴³ I would like to express special thanks to Dr. Zachary Valentine Wright from Northwestern University in Qatar, who provided me with a list of works that were influential in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries West Africa.

The *sira* (biography) of Prophet has also been widely taught. It seems to have been a continuation of an earlier pre-Islamic historical genre known as *Ayyam al-Arab* (history of the Arabs), which narrates the genealogy and way of life of Arab Bedouins, as well as their values, such as generosity, bravery, and courage. (86)

Reynolds traces other pre-Islamic autobiographical traditions and genres in his book, *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, which suggests that some enslaved African American Muslims, if not all, had a background in autobiographical writing traditions. An example of a common *sira* work widely available in West Africa is *Kitab Al-shifa' Bi-tarif Huquq Al-muṣṭafa* by the Andalusian scholar, Al-Qadi Iyad (Hall and Stewart 124). According to Hall and Stewart, the “field of Islamic devotional poetry is vast and begins with the 7th century” with Ka'b b. Zuhayr's poem “Banat Su'ad” (125). Kane states that “praising the Prophet Muhammad [(PBUH)] . . . is one of the most common genres found in the intellectual production of the Bilad al-Sudan [, West Africa]” (85). Other famous poems are “Al Burda” by Al Busari and “Dala'il al Khayrat” by Al-Jazuli.

A further possible literary influence on the writings of enslaved African American Muslims is through the texts and works that are related to the subject of Arabic language, Arabic grammar and vocabulary. For instance, Arabic pre-Islamic poetry *Al-Muallaqat* were “committed to memory by all accomplished Islamic scholars as part of their studies and thus helped develop a sound vocabulary in Arabic language” (Kane 90). Another pre-Islamic poem is by Al-Shanfara, “Lamiyyat Al-'arab,” which belongs to the “‘brigand-poets’ genre, in which the hero-outcast describes his trials and tribulations” (Hall and Stewart 123). Al-Ḥariri's

Al-Maqamat, which also commonly found in West African libraries, is a dialogue in poetry that consists of “difficult and rare vocabulary” (Hall and Stewart 121). Regarding Arabic syntax, *Alfyyia Ibn Malik* was widely circulated in West Africa (Kane 90, Hall and Stewart 121) along with Al-Ḥariri’s *Mulḥat al-i‘rab* (Hunwick 65, Hall and Stewart 122). All these texts are poetic which helped students to memorize them. John Hunwick remarks that Omar, in one of his letters written in 1819, mentions the opening lines of Al-Ḥariri’s *Mulḥat al-i‘rab* (65).

Reynolds seeks the origins of Arabic autobiography in Chapter Two. He starts with discussion of the early types of “biographical traditions” which appeared in the pre-Islamic period, *Akhbar*, “a type of oral biography in the form of short narratives” (36). Then, Reynolds moves to discuss biographical writing as literary genres: *sira*, *trajama*, *barnamaj*, *fahrasa*, and *manaqib*. The word “*barnamaj*” in the context of biographical writings was used particularly in Islamic Spain and later some parts of North Africa, whereas the term “*fahrasa*” or “*fihrist*” was limited to North Africa and especially Sufi contexts (38).

According to Reynolds, *sira* (exemplary life story) is “the earliest of full biographical forms, dating at least to the second Islamic century,” which appeared in the eighth century (38). Ibn Ishraq and Ibn Hisham wrote this kind of biography about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The term *sira* also refers to autobiographies, for example al-Muayyed’s *Sirat al Muayyed*. *Tabbaqat* is another biographical literary genre which is “biographical dictionaries or biographical compendiums” (39-40). Reynolds believes that *Tabbaqat* too helped the autobiography genre to emerge. *Tarjama* to denote a “biographical notice” usually provides accounts of “the subject’s name and ancestry, date of birth . . . , a catalog of teachers . . . , a

bibliography of works written by the subject . . . , travel and pilgrimage accounts . . . , and collections of entertaining or illuminating anecdotes” (42). Also, *Tarjama* may consist of other elements, such as the subject’s letters, poetry and virtues. Reynolds concludes that:

Autobiography as a specific type of Arabic literature . . . evolved mainly in the context of the Arabic biographical tradition, which in turn had emerged primarily as a branch of historical writing. Autobiography writing developed first within two primary forms: *sira* and *tarjama*. Limited exposure to pre-Islamic Greek and Persian models in Arabic translation exerted some influence on physicians and philosophers of the tenth to twelfth centuries. (47)

Reynolds’s findings cast doubt on Diouf’s claim that autobiography was a completely new writing exercise for enslaved African American Muslims in America (*Servants* 203). Enslaved African American Muslims studied and were exposed to Arabic texts including, for example, the *sira* (biography) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which have affected their writing or have functioned as an indirect influence on writing their narratives. For instance, Reynolds remarks that the autobiographies of Abd al-Rahman and Omar “clearly draw on features of the Arabic religious biographical tradition” even though there is not any definitive evidence that these narrators had read Arabic autobiography (58). Similarly, Basima Shaheen claims that Omar’s *Life* has been influenced by “two important genres of Arabic autobiography, *Tabaqat* (biographical dictionaries) and *Tarjamat* (biographical notices)” (190).

2.3 Enslaved African American Muslims

Analyses of works of enslaved African American Muslims can provide a better understanding of their views toward slavery. In support of this fact, Diouf claims that “[u]nderstanding the circumstances in Africa that resulted in the Muslims’ captivity is of crucial importance for understanding their reaction to enslavement in the Americas and the direction they gave to their new life” (*Servants* 37). From a religious perspective, the following part is going to concentrate on five enslaved African American Muslims: Ayyub Ben Suleiman, Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, Omar ibn Said, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua and Muhammad Ali Ben (Nicholas) Said to investigate whether their views about slavery were affected by Islamic principles regarding slavery more than their African traditions. Afroz states that there were many enslaved Muslims who submitted to their fate, whereas others resisted and revolted against their enslavement, for example the Bahia Revolt 1835 in Brazil. Afroz explains that enslaved Muslims who submitted to their enslavement as their fate considered it as

Submission to the Will of Allah. Educated in Qur’anic studies, they believed that, “No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence: That is truly easy for God” (Holy Qur’an 57:22). It is that all causes come from Allah and that everything is within His control and power. Everything is subject to His Will and nothing has a will of its own. The acceptance of the Will of Allah is the unshakable belief in divine decree and predestination, an essential element of *Iman* (faith). (120)

As Afroz refers to the influence of their religious education on their attitudes toward their enslavements, from a socio-historical perspective the following part also discusses their educational background. Some of these enslaved narrators such as Abdr-Rahman, Omar and Ayyub, refer to their education at the beginning of their narratives which indicates the importance of presenting themselves literate persons.⁴⁴

2.3.1 Ayyub Ben Suleiman

In fact, Ayyub practiced slavery before his enslavement and after he gained his freedom, he is known to have bought an enslaved woman. In his homeland, Bundo, Ayyub was a merchant and appeared to be a slave trader; for example, he sold two enslaved men just before his own enslavement. The key question I will investigate is, how did Ayyub view the way of his enslavement, the relationship with his master and his life as an enslaved person? How far was his view affected by the Islamic principles of slavery?⁴⁵

Regarding his capture, Ayyub was kidnapped with his interpreter and servant Lomein Ybai by the Mandingos who were his tribe's enemy. A couple of days before his enslavement, Ayyub tried to sell two enslaved men to Captain Pike, a captain of an English ship, in order to buy paper, but they could not agree on price. He crossed

⁴⁴ In his autobiography, Abu Baker Al Siddiq, who experienced his enslavement in Jamaica, presents his educational background and names of some scholars even before he gives details of his family. This is because he mentions he was born in Timbuktu, which at that time was considered as a seat of learning in West Africa.

⁴⁵ The argument here raises the point that Ayyub is not the author of his account, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* (1734). Therefore, the account does not convey his genuine view about slavery. However, Bluett's biography of Ayyub and Francis Moore's account *Travels Into the Inland Parts of Africa* (1738) reveal some evidence of Ayyub's relationships with slavery before his enslavement and also after he returned to Africa.

into the Mandingos' land with Lomein Ybai, even though his father had warned him about doing that, and exchanged the enslaved persons for "twenty-eight head of cattle" (Grant 67). He decided to take a rest and lay down all his weapons. While he was resting, seven or eight Mandingos seized him, Lomein and their weapons. The kidnappers shaved their heads and took all the possessions that could reveal their high status in order that they appeared as prisoners of war (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 79). Then, the Mandingos sold Ayyub and Lomein to Captain Pike. Ayyub asked Captain Pike to wait for his father's ransom, but the message was very late. His father sent "several" enslaved people, presumably non-Muslims, as the ransom for his son (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 79). These events clearly indicate that slavery was a practice in Ayyub's homeland.⁴⁶ However, it was illegal to enslave Muslims in Bundu as the testimony refers to protect every runaway Muslim (Austin, *Sourcebook* 78). Also, Austin mentions that travelers noted Muslim Fulbe or Fula, an African ethnic group to which most enslaved African American Muslim narrators and Ayyub belonged, "were prominent in the slave trade—as they were prominent in all trade. But they were not all slavers and they had their codes for the business" (*Sourcebook* 27). Since Ayyub was a Muslim and enslaved illegally according to the Islamic perspective, he believed that he should not be considered as an enslaved person. Clearly, Ayyub did not agree with his enslavement since he sent messengers to his father in an attempt to free himself and his interpreter.

Ayyub arrived in Maryland in 1731, where Tolsey became his master. Ayyub's relationship with his master Tolsey is not explained in detail in *Some*

⁴⁶ Enslaved people were a recognized social class in Bundu. For instance, in Section Three, Bluett writes "In JOB [Ayyub's] Country the Slaves, and poorer sort of People" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 84).

Memoirs.⁴⁷ Generally, Tolsey appeared to be a kind master to Ayyub.⁴⁸ It was never reported that Tolsey had physically abused Ayyub or mistreated him. For example, Moore states in his account that Ayyub lived with Tolsey for about one year “without being once beat by his master” (qtd. in Curtin 55). Also, when Ayyub complained about the hard work on a tobacco plantation, Bluett states that “his Master was obliged to find easier Work for him” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 80); Tolsey subsequently assigned him to work with the cattle. Even though Tolsey had given him alternative work, he was still unhappy with it and he “would often leave the Cattle, and withdraw into the Woods to pray” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 80). We should think carefully about this ‘kind’ treatment whilst he was an enslaved person when we consider his return into the slave trade after he, himself, was freed. It could have been different if he was treated badly. According to Grant, “Tolsey must have been either careless or inexperienced in the managing of slaves to set Job [Ayyub] immediately to the heavy work of a tobacco plantation” (79). Similarly, Austin claims that “Tolsey seems to have pushed Job [Ayyub] hard at first, but to have become quite reasonable and resigned later. Had he been informed that the Fulbe usually abhorred physical labor and had a tendency to malingering in the face of it . . . and that the Fulbe loved cattle?” (*Sourcebook* 113). Another possibility is that Tolsey was simply a kind hearted master.

Bluett writes that there are “other Misfortunes” and this comment also adds to the unclear master-slave relationship. One of these misfortunes was the abuse that

⁴⁷ See also Turkistani (108).

⁴⁸ Tolsey appeared similar to Omar’s master, Owen, in his kindness. However, Omar agreed to stay with Owen unlike Ayyub.

Ayyub suffered by a white boy while he was praying, which led to him thinking of running away. However, Bluett does not specify what these “other misfortunes” are, whether they are related to Ayyub’s master-slave relationship or to other things. Turkistani believes that Bluett’s phrase suggests that “he is inconsistent with his plentiful details of cultural, geographical, and historical information in the rest of the biography” (108). Later, Bluett refers to Ayyub’s motivations to escape, saying that “he might possibly be taken up by some Master, who would use him better, or otherwise meet with some lucky Accident, to divert or abate his Grief” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 80). So, Ayyub was looking for a kind master. Arguably, Ayyub was applying the Islamic concept of *hijra*, which means a flight from a place, where Muslims receive harsh treatment and cannot practice their Islamic duties, to a better place.⁴⁹ This interpretation echoes Sidonie Smith’s description of slave narrative as narratives of transformation, “[t]he slave narrative embodies two directional movements: alienation and flight from one society and (theoretically or hopefully) integration and acceptance in another” (13-14). Presumably, Ayyub thought that there was a place outside Maryland where he could live freely according to the law of Bundo for runaway Muslim slaves. However, Bluett comments that after Ayyub escaped and was recaptured, Tolsey “became kinder to him and gave him a place to pray, and some other Conveniences, in order to make his Slavery as easy as possible” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 80-81). Ayyub was a trader and an adventurer when he

⁴⁹ Omar also conveys the *hijra* trope when he fled from his master as will be discussed later in this chapter. Afroz discusses, with a broader scope, the idea of *hijra* which was applied by many enslaved Muslims in America: “[a] common resistance to the slave system was the *hijra*/ flight from servitude to establish their own *ummah*/ communities based on consensual leadership (*shura*) and Islamic tradition and culture in inhospitable and inaccessible areas throughout the Americas” (118).

risked his own capture and traveled to the Mandingoes' land to sell his enslaved men. Possibly, his previous career motivated him to find a better place as he found a better price for his enslaved men when he had crossed into his enemy land. This interpretation echoes Austin's perspective—Ayyub “was not reconciled to being a slave” (55). Ayyub disagreed with the idea of being an enslaved person mainly as a result of his faith. This is because, arguably, others would have been more accepting of their situation as a result of the favorable treatment.

Ayyub was given what he had asked for and his master was kind, “[y]et Slavery and Confinement was by no means agreeable to JOB [Ayyub], who had never been used to it” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 81). While he was at Tolsey's plantation, Ayyub wrote a letter in Arabic to his father to redeem himself from slavery. Turkistani believes that enslaved African American Muslims were strong believers and one of the Islamic principles of belief is to submit to one's fate and to be patient and not protest (159); with respect to Ayyub, Turkistani claims that:

Unlike many other slaves, he ran away not because of physical abuse, but because of psychological abuse. . . . This shows that his faith in God and acceptance of his fate did not change. He did not show any sign of resentment or anger against his fate. Of course, he tried to change his situation, but not for material gain; his escape was motivated by his religious beliefs and would thus be considered a great deed for a Muslim. (105-106)

To a certain degree Turkistani's argument about Ayyub's religious motivation to escape is correct. When Ayyub could not practice his Islamic belief, his problem became psychological rather than physical. Al-Ahari also believes that “[s]lavery

was a fact of life for him [Ayyub] and a condition he was placed in by the hand of God. He accepted his fate as long as he could practice Islam. He attempted escape when he was harassed while performing his duties to God” (13).

Despite Ayyub’s strong religious belief which dominates throughout Bluett’s account, from his religious education in his homeland to his religious arguments with English people,⁵⁰ he did not apply hadiths of the Prophet regarding master-slave relationship.⁵¹ He possibly disputed the idea of his enslavement since it was illegal to enslave a Muslim and his master was not a Muslim. Regarding Ayyub’s education, he was educated in Arabic before his enslavement. However, Curtin claims that “[t]he level of his knowledge of Arabic also points to the kind of education that might be expected of a *diula*, or travelling merchant, rather than of an important Islamic scholar” (26). He adds that his letters in Arabic suggest that he was “neither familiar with spoken Arabic nor grounded in classical written Arabic” (26). Contrary to this claim, Ayyub was educated to officiate as an imam. As the testimony states, “[w]hen Job [Ayyub] was fifteen Years old, he assisted his Father as Emam, or Sub-priest” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 78).⁵²

In relation to his enslavement, Ayyub interpreted some events of his experience from a religious perspective. For instance, when he returned to Africa, he

⁵⁰ For example, Ayyub disputes the Trinity and his initial refuses the offer himself being painted as a symbol for worship.

⁵¹ Unlike Ayyub, Omar, 90 years later, praises his master Owen for his kindness and good treatment. The hadith says “Goodness and comfort are for him (the slave) who worships his Lord (Allah) in a perfect manner and serves his master sincerely” (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2549).

⁵² See also Turkistani (103).

met some of his former Mandingo kidnappers and learned that their king at the time of his enslavement was killed. Ayyub states:

Mr. Moore, you see now God Almighty was displeased at this man's making me a slave, and therefore made him die by the very pistol for which he sold me; yet I out to forgive him, says he, because had I not been sold, I should neither have known any thing of English tongue, nor have had any of the fine useful and valuable things I now carry over, nor have known that in the world there is such a place as England, nor such noble, good generous people as Queen Caroline , Prince William and the Duke of Montague, the Earl of Pembroke, Mr. Holden, Mr. Oglethorpe, and the Royal African Company. (qtd. in Curtin 56-57)

Incidentally, Ayyub did not mention his enslavement experience in America and limits the experience to the time when he was in England, among English gentlemen. Again, this indicates that he is in denial of the fact he was an enslaved person. Instead, the experience appears as if it was part of his trading travels, in which he strengthened his commercial relationship with English people.

To sum up Ayyub's view about slavery, practicing slavery on non-Muslim people is permitted even if they are not war prisoners, whereas Muslims must not be enslaved. He bought and sold non-Muslim enslaved persons. Through his Islamic perspective, he tried to prevent the enslavement of Muslims; when he made an agreement with the African Royal Company, "whenever a Mohammedan was bought as a slave by the Company's agents in the Gambia, should be allowed to redeem himself upon application, in exchange for two other good slaves" (Grant 108). One

example for his religious view against Muslim enslavement was his request to free Lomein Ybai who had been enslaved in Maryland, which took place later in 1737 (Grant 108, 195-196). However, the experience of his enslavement did not change him. According to Moore's account *Travels Into the Inland Parts of Africa* (1738), Ayyub continued practicing slavery after his return to Africa; he "sold some of the presents he bought with him from England for trading-goods, with which he brought a woman-slave and two horses" (qtd. in Curtin 57). According to Grant, Ayyub also sold four enslaved persons to buy a horse (179). Another indication of Ayyub's attitude toward slavery after his return to Africa is his claim of owning two slaves whom the Royal African Company took from him (Grant 197-198). Ayyub presents himself as merchant throughout his account. He viewed his trade in non-Muslim enslaved people from a commercial perspective. However, regarding enslaving Muslims, he disagreed with it on religious grounds.

2.3.2 Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim

Abdr-Rahman describes in details how he was taken captive in Africa. He states that he was a war leader to "fight the Hebohs, because they destroyed the vessels that came to the coast, and prevented our trade" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 146). Historically, Abdr-Rahman's father, Ibrahim Sori, led successful wars in the late of 1720s against non-Muslims (Austin, *Transatlantic* 69). Austin remarks that war captives of "this political and economic empire was closely related to the Atlantic trade in Africans" (*Transatlantic* 69). Austin states that Abdr-Rahman's half-brother, Abdul Qadiri, declared in 1821 that their tribe traded in slaves "because Europeans were not interested in any other items" (*Transatlantic* 70). When Abdr-Rahman defeated his enemy and he was in his way home, a group of his enemies hid

and fought and attacked Abdr-Rahman and his cavalry troop. Despite resisting, Abdr-Rahman with fifty of his men were moved to Gambia River and were sold to a British slave ship. A question that arises here is whether Abdr-Rahman agreed with this practice or not. Diouf believes that Abdr-Rahman was involved in the transatlantic slave trade which may suggest that Abdr-Rahman agreed with the practice of slavery (*Servants* 29-30). However, why did not Abdr-Rahman enslave his enemy when he defeated them earlier? Abdr-Rahman's translated autobiography does not describe his attitude toward the practice of slavery. Arguably, he might describe that in his original autobiography, but it did not interest the narrative's translator.

Abdr-Rahman did not tell in his narratives about his relationship with his master, Foster, and Foster's treatment of him as an enslaved person. Terry Alford mentioned in *Prince Among Slaves* that Foster humiliated Abdr-Rahman (44).⁵³ Abdr-Rahman did not submit easily to his new position and he "suffered whippings and field work" (Austin *Transatlantic* 71). However, we do know that Abdr-Rahman ran away from his master from Alford's biography. After a couple of weeks, Abdr-Rahman came back to his master. When he saw his mistress, Abdr-Rahman laid on the ground and put her feet over his neck. Alford assumes that Abdr-Rahman accepted being an enslaved person by his behavior and "was placing his life in the hands of the Fosters. If they wanted him back, here he was; if they wanted to kill him, they could do that, too" (47). However, a man like Abdr-Rahman would not easily submit to such a situation. Arguably, Abdr-Rahman returned to his master, but with plans that would help him to gain his freedom.

⁵³ This point is elaborated in Chapter 4.

Dabovic frames Abdr-Rahman's reaction in Islamic understanding. That Abdr-Rahman wanted to "buy himself time and to nurse an internalized belief that manumission would eventually come" and to gain his master's trust ("Displacement" 41). Foster trusted Abdr-Rahman after his return, as Griffin refers in "The Unfortunate Moor" to Foster's comment on Abdr-Rahman:

[Foster] has never known him [Abdr-Rahman] intoxicated, (he makes no use of ardent spirits)—never detected him in dishonesty of falsehood—nor has known his guilty of a mean action; and though born and raised in affluence, he has submitted to his fate without a murmur, and has been an industrious and faithful servant. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 134-135)

Foster provided Abdr-Rahman with free time, a house, and something of a private life with his family. Austin remarks that such treatment was "the treatment loyal slaves of the Fulbe received in Futa Jallon" (*Transatlantic* 71). Alford comments that Foster was a religious person (40). Being with a religious master was preferable to being with a non-believer for Abdr-Rahman since the former would protect his right as an enslaved person. In fact, Abdr-Rahman converted to Christianity, even though it was questionable, which suggests believing and practicing the same religion of his master would lead to the latter to release Abdr-Rahman.

Moreover, Abdr-Rahman's attitude did not change even after Foster refused to Dr. Cox's attempt to pay for Abdr-Rahman's manumission. This might be understood that his Islamic principles influenced his behavior, which may also lead Foster to change his mind. Or maybe simply, he was afraid of something bad would happen to his children if he resisted. However, what Foster rewarded Abdr-Rahman

with was to release him from working at the plantation in 1818 and appointed him as an overseer. Later on Abdr-Rahman decided to write a letter to Africa to be released.

Abdr-Rahman was literate in Arabic and spoke three other languages, Bambara, Mandingo, and Jallonke (Austin, *Sourcebook* 126). His Islamic education had influenced his writings. An Arabic autobiographical sketch reflects Abdr-Rahman's Islamic education and identity, such as mentioning the Prophet and Quranic verses.⁵⁴ This autobiographical does not convey a lot about Abdr-Rahman's personal background except his name. Also, it does not give detail about his enslavement experience. English translation is provided immediately beneath Abdr-Rahman's writing. However, the translation is different from the original in provides background information about Abdr-Rahman, his enslavement and obtaining his freedom. This translation may also suggest that Abdr-Rahman's longer translated autobiography by the ACS possibly is not accurate too or, more precisely does not convey Abdr-Rahman's original literary styles and ideas.

2.3.3 Omar Ibn Said

According to Austin, Omar's father had seventy enslaved people, but his father died when Omar was five years old (*Transatlantic* 133). There is no evidence that Omar had enslaved persons. But, since he was from a wealthy family, this fact increases the possibility that he was an owner. In his article "Who Was 'Umar ibn Sayyid? A Critical Reevaluation of the Translations and Interpretations of the *Life*," William Costel Tamplin believes that Omar was an enslaver and also he owned enslaved people in the United States (139, 145). However, Tamplin's assumption is

⁵⁴ A copy of the autobiography is presented at Austin's *Transatlantic Stories* (74).

cast in doubt, particularly, by Omar's ownership of an enslaved person in the United States. Omar did not quote in his known manuscripts precise verses from the Holy Quran or hadiths, which refer to freeing the enslaved as had been discussed earlier. However, his narratives reveal some hadiths and Quranic verses, which can explain Omar's relationship with his master and slavery in general. The following paragraphs concern Omar's understanding and view of his enslavement, his relationships with his masters and his general view about slavery. This part mainly is going to focus on Omar's *The Life* (1831). The narrative tells about how he was captured and his relationship with his masters more than in his other manuscripts. As mentioned, the appendix includes Omar's original manuscripts and Chapter 4 highlights the complications revolving around Omar's script and language use. For the purpose of the present chapter, I quote from the most accurate available translation provided by Ala Alryyes in 2011.

Firstly, regarding how Omar was taken captive, he describes the invaders as *Kuffar*, "infidels" who "took me unjustly" (Ibn Said 77). Omar's description of the incident reveals that the "big army" attacked the village (or the country, as Omar states) in which the enemy "killed many people" (Ibn Said 61). Omar's selection of the word "people" instead of the word "men" refers to the possibility that children, women and elderly men were also among the victims. This action is against the principles of legitimate war as defined in Islamic law. Despite Omar's self-admitted weakness in remembering the Arabic language well, he uses the word *rejaal*, "men" in his autobiography in another situation when he tells about being released from jail. Therefore, Omar thoughtfully chose the word "people". However, Diouf states that

the this war ended with the murder of the founder of the Islamic state and Almamy⁵⁵ of Futa Toro, Abdel Kader Kane, along with “many men” being killed, “while others were made prisoners” (“God” 162). Diouf limits the victims to male participants in the war. Whether the victims were the participating males only, or were young, female and old people, as well, Omar assumes the view of this war as a free Muslim. He was enslaved unjustly by someone who did not share the same religion. These elements, e.g. unjust war and enslavement by infidels, lead to the assumption that Omar viewed his enslavement as unacceptable.

Additionally, Omar states in his autobiography that he yearly participated in military *jihad*, war, when he was in his homeland (Ibn Said 69). Diouf estimates that Omar was captured because he was an “active, well known or influential” follower of the leader, Abdul Kader Kane, and he participated in the leader’s religious reformation movements against the enslavement of Muslims (“God” 174). Here is another indication through his participation in the *jihad* that Omar did not accept when Muslim were enslaved. However, he may have inclined toward enslavement of non-Muslim prisoners. Diouf mentions that Kane mostly spoke out against enslaving Muslims even though in 1786 he prevented the French from trading “in mostly non-Muslim from the Bambara Kingdom in the east” (“God” 169).

The second perspective is the treatment of and relationships with his masters. According to Austin, Omar had three masters (*Transatlantic* 134). Omar, in his autobiography, only mentions his last two masters: Johnson in Charleston, South Carolina; and later after he ran away and was recaptured and imprisoned, James

⁵⁵ Diouf provides the definition of Almamy in her endnotes as “a title of a religious and political leader, from the Arabic *al-imam*” (“God” 177).

Owen in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Omar remained under Owen's ownership until the end of his life in 1863. Throughout the autobiography, it is clear that Omar did not like working with Johnson, whereas he praises the good treatment which he received from Owen. Many scholars question whether he changed his religion⁵⁶ or not after his arrival in the New World and especially after being Owen's enslaved person. Regarding Omar's identity, Turkistani claims that "Omar ibn Said is a controversial character for his ambiguous intentions and the double message of his writing" (155). He concludes that Omar "was able to convince Christians as well as Muslims of his religious belief" (155). Turkistani's argument about Omar's ambiguity toward his own religious beliefs parallels his confused representation of his enslavement.

Omar apparently submitted to being an enslaved person. This assumption of his submission could be possibly because of physical or spiritual reasons. For the physical reason, he was an old and weak person as he confirms, being "a small" and "ill man" (Ibn Said 61, 63, 79). Omar wrote his autobiography when he was about 59 years old. In addition, Ralph Gurley, in the "Secretary Report" of the ACS, states that "[b]eing of a feeble constitution, Moro's [Omar] duties have been of the lightest kind, and he has been treated rather as a friend than a servant" (217). So, as Turkistani claims, Omar did not have much strength and wanted to live the rest of his life in peace with Owen (160). At the same time, it seems as if he was trying to gain the trust of his new master. Perhaps that was the reason for not quoting the precise verses that command manumitting enslaved people.

⁵⁶ Some scholars, such as Alryess, Austin, Turkistani, Ghada Osman and Camille F. Forbes, assume that Omar preserved his old faith, Islam, because of his last known manuscript (1857), is the Quranic Chapter 110, *Alnasser*, which he quoted before his death by six years. These scholars draw to attention that this Quranic Chapter was, in fact, revealed to the Prophet after Fateh Makkah and not a long time before his death.

Regarding the spiritual reason, Omar practiced his Islamic faith by being patient and observing his understanding of Quranic verses relating to Christians and hadiths on slavery. Unlike other slave narrators who wrote about their suffering in slavery, Omar does not show a lot of emotion about that. Diouf explains such an attitude is because of the African “pride and dignity, for not wanting to mention the abjection one had to go through” (*Servants* 206).

Omar sought education for twenty-five years, a pursuit of which he felt proud of by mentioning of it in the autobiography. He declared that he “love[d] read[ing] the book, the Great Qur’an” (Ibn Said 73). Also, he was a teacher in his homeland for six years. The important role of Omar’s religious education is not deniable. Reynolds claims that the autobiographies of Abdr-Rahman and Omar “clearly draw on features of the Arabic religious biographical tradition” even though there is no absolute evidence that these narrators had read any Arabic autobiographies (58). However, Hunwick has another opinion that even though Omar:

had benefited from an Arabic education in his youth, he had not reached such heights as would have made him into a scholar in his own right. He was literate but not learned. This raises doubts as to whether he could have spent as much as twenty-five years solely in the pursuit of education, as he appears to claim. (65-66)

However, Omar’s religious education informed his perspective. He criticizes Johnson based on religion. He says “I fell into the hands of a small, weak, and wicked man who did not fear Allah at all, nor did he read and pray. I was afraid to stay with such a wicked man who committed evil deeds so I escaped” (Ibn Said 77). Omar’s description of Johnson is an indication that he was not a religious master. However,

Omar praises the Owen family for being devoted Christians. This suggests that Omar was impacted by the verses in the Holy Quran which explain the relationship toward believers of the Book. According to Chapter 5 in the Holy Quran, devoted Christians tolerate Muslims more than any religious sect,:

82. Verily, you will find the strongest among men in enmity to the believers (Muslims) the Jews and those who are *Al-Mushrikun* . . . [Pagans], and you will find the nearest in love to the believers (Muslims) those who say: “We are Christians.” That is because amongst them are priests and monks, and they are not proud.

83. And when they (who call themselves Christians) listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger (Muhammad . . .) you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of the truth they have recognized. They say: “Our Lord! We believe; so write us down among the witnesses”.

Furthermore, in the Holy Quran (29: 46) also explains Muslims’ dealing with Christians.

And argue not with the People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words and in good manner, inviting them to Islamic Monotheism with His Verses), except with such of them as do wrong; and say (to them): “We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you; Our *Ilah* (God) and your *Ilah* (God) is One (i.e Allah), and to Him we have submitted (as Muslims)”

These verses provide evidence of Omar's submission and respect to his master. Omar saw that Owen was a true Christian and he included him among the Christians which the verse describes. As Omar expresses in a letter⁵⁷ to Lamine Kebe Owen is a religious man who treats him well "[f]rom one man to another I went until I fell into the hands of a pious man. He read the Bible for me until my eyes were opened, now I can see; thank God for it. I am dealt with as a child, not as a servant" (Gurley 219). In fact, his master "was so good that he managed to find a Quran in English" when Omar had asked for it (Austin, *Transatlantic* 135). Again, this instance may also indicate to Omar that Owen loved or put up with Muslims.

Moreover, Omar was influenced by his reading and studying *sira*. Through reading the Prophet's *sira*, a person would encounter Al Najashi's story. Al-Najashi was a Christian king of Ethiopia who protected the early refugee Muslims from the non-believers of Quraish. This event may have encouraged Omar to respect and view Owen "who loves to do good deeds" (Ibn Said 77) as Al-Najashi--especially after his escape from Johnson who was not religious and "did not fear Allah at all".

Additionally, the Quranic verse (29: 46) also can explain Omar's submission from a different perspective. Omar did not want to argue with his master since he was a pious person, and "read from the Bible (*Ingeel*) that Allah is our Lord, our Creator, and our Owner and the restorer of our condition, health and wealth by grace and not duty" (Ibn Said 67). He tried to identify the similarities between Christianity and Islam through comparing passages from the Holy Bible and the Lord's Prayer with passages from the first Chapter of the Holy Quran, *Alfatiha*. He also mentioned

⁵⁷ Turkistani doubts that this letter was written by Omar since its contents and "phraseology" is different from Omar's other manuscripts (169).

his religious duties, such as five prayers, ablution, alms, *jihad* and his journey to Mecca and Madinah. Austin quotes Charles Colcock Jones, a preacher and historian in Georgia who (without giving an estimated figure) said that some enslaved people ““accommodate[d] Christianity to Mohammedanism [Islam]””. They said “God is Allah, and Jesus Christ is Mohammed- the religion is the same, but different countries have different names”⁵⁸ (*Transatlantic* 40). Arguably, Omar was different from the Muslims which Jones referred to. Austin argues that the Lord’s Prayer does not convey that Omar converted to Christianity (*Transatlantic* 136).⁵⁹ Alryyes also claims that neither the Lord’s Prayer nor the Twenty-third Psalm “contradict Islamic beliefs” (26). Austin and Alryyes’s argument also indicates that Omar tries to present the similarity of the two religions.

In fact, Omar pointed out the similarity between the two religions, in his Arabic manuscript (1819). He copies the Quranic verse (2: 285) that he also believes in Jesus (PBUH) as a prophet, as a fundamental principle of Islam:

The Messenger (Muhammad . . .) believes in what hath been sent down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. (They say,) “We make no distinction between one and another of His Messengers.” -- and they say: “We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return (of all).”

⁵⁸ Also, Diouf presents the previous idea, which Austin also presented, in her book *Servants of Allah* (83).

⁵⁹ Omar copies the Lord’s Prayer in other three manuscripts. See Austin (*Transatlantic* 137-144).

Omar's juxtaposition of religious passages from Islam and Christianity has led scholars, such as Diouf, to claim that Omar did not "assert" his own belief "too clearly" (*Servants* 208). An important related point is Omar's apology to Sheikh Hunter⁶⁰ and others for his unfamiliarity with Arabic. He uses vocative style: "O my brothers" (Ibn Said 59). "My brothers", perhaps, Omar refers to Americans and the Christians in particular since he speaks, in the autobiography, to people of North and South Carolina and America in general, and he indicates "all of you" (67). Ghada Osman and Camille Forbes, however, believe that he separates himself from the "other," western and Christian people (332).

Omar was indirect in presenting his point of view. Perhaps he was under the hands of the Owen family and desired the earthly reward in which he could live peacefully with them. Or a further possibility, he could get a chance to gain his freedom through applying the Prophet's saying. Austin postulates that by adopting Owens' religion, Omar could receive good treatment from his master"--as was the way in Muslim lands and supposedly also in the lands enlightened by the New Testament, though it was seldom the case, according to ar-Rahman [Abdr-Rahman], other American slave narrators, and histories of American treatment of Africans" (*Transatlantic* 152-153). However, other scholars, such as Alryyes (17-18, 22), and Osman and Forbes (338), believe that these verses which Omar selected were actually anti-slavery and conveyed his old faith, Islam.

Concerning treatment of enslaved people, Omar was influenced by hadiths. He says that "the hands of Jim Owen who does not beat me, nor calls me bad names, nor subjects me to hunger, nakedness, or hard work . . . During the last twenty years I

⁶⁰ Alryyes estimates that Hunter was a member of the ACS (17).

have not seen any harm at the hands of Jim Owen” (Ibn Said 79). Earlier in the autobiography, he praises James and his brother, John Owen, that “[t]hey are good men for whatever they eat, I eat; and whatever they wear they give me to wear” (Ibn Said 67). Omar’s words in describing the good treatment strongly recall the Prophet’s hadith:

Your slaves are your brethren upon whom Allah has given you authority. So, if one has one’s brethren under one’s control, one should feed them with the like of what one eats and clothe them with the like of what one wears. You should not overburden them with what they cannot bear, and if you do so, help them (in their hard job) (Al-Bukhari; bk. 49 num. 2545)

Good clothing and eating, and reasonable workloads are all what the Prophet asked the masters and what Omar got from the Owen family. In addition, Omar emphasizes that James Owen did not beat him (Ibn Said 79) which can be another indication of compliance with the Prophet’s sayings. This suggests that Omar’s view of a good master, based on his religious background, can be extended to include a pious Christian who loves Muslims. This master would preserve an enslaved person’s rights; and if the person did not gain his freedom, at least he would have a peaceful relationship with his master--even though, as Austin thinks, Omar “seems never to have been fully at ease in America” (*Sourcebook* 453). Generally, Omar followed some hadiths that deal with the good treatment of the enslaved people.

Even though Omar did not use direct quotations and statements from the Holy Quran or hadiths that enhance manumitting enslaved persons, he views slavery through his Islamic understanding. Through this understanding, he was able to deal

with his captivity: “[t]he garden has been to him a place of recreation rather than toil, and the concern is not that he should labor more but less” (Gurley 217) in which he can live a peaceful life in his old age. He continued practicing his old faith, Islam; his last minister, Mathew Grier, doubted Omar was a true Christian (Austin, *Transatlantic* 135).

2.3.4 Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua

Mahommah describes in his narrative that his family belonged to a merchant community. *The Biography* mentions in Chapter II that slavery existed in Djougou and explains how some people became enslaved, and their rights and status in the society. However, whether Mahommah’s family was trading in slavery or not is not clear in the narrative. According to Mahommah, people in Djougou “exchange[d] slaves, cows and ivory for salt” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 608). Criminals were punished by selling them out of the country as enslaved people (Austin, *Sourcebook* 600). Another “fruitful source” of slavery, as *The Biography* states, was war (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 609). African enemy’s prisoners “are treated very cruelly; they flog and otherwise abuse them, until an opportunity occurs of disposing of them as slaves” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 610). Mahommah criticizes wars because they lead to supplying the slave trade with captives: “This alas is too often the consequence of war, wherever it is practised, not only in Africa, but in all parts where the bloody strife is engaged in” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 610).

Mahommah states that an enslaved person could leave and go to the king if his master did not treat him well. The king could appoint the enslaved person as a soldier and therefore his master must free him as Mahommah remarks that “No ‘fugitive slave law’ can touch him” (Austin, *Sourcebook* 601). He presumably

criticizes the American law regarding runaways. Mahommah also condemns slavery as a practice in Africa. He describes it as “[t]he greatest source of misery to Africa . . . which is carried on to a fearful extent, but domestic slavery in that country is nothing when compared to this [New World slavery system]; but the trading of slaves is very horrible” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 610).

A significant point that merits mentioning here is that Mahommah experienced enslavement prior to his Brazilian slavery. However, he did not provide detailed information about his African enslavement experience. The first account concerning his African enslavement is in Chapter VI, Mahommah “was once taken prisoner and sold, but was redeemed by his mother, but more of this in the proper place” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 610). Later in Chapter VII, Mahommah reveals more about his enslavement. He was on a visit to Daboya, a city in central Gonja, when a civil war started there and he was taken captive. Later, he was manumitted by his brother. Regarding his African enslavement, Mahommah states that:

I was tied up very tightly; they placed a rope around my neck and took me off with them. We traveled through a wood and came to a place I shall never forget, full of mosquitoes! But they were indeed mosquitoes, none of your small flies, [sic] gnats and such like, that people in North America call mosquitoes, but real big hungry fellows, with stings and suckers enough to drain every drop of blood out of a man’s body at one draw . . . I never wish to be in that place again, or any other like it; it was truly horrible.

Whilst traveling through the wood, we met my brother, but neither of us spoke or seemed to know each other; he turned another way without arousing any suspicion; and then went to a place, and procured a person to purchase me. Had it been known who it was, they would have insisted upon a very great price as my ransom, but it was only a small sum that was required for my release. It should have been mentioned that the city was destroyed, the women and children having been sent away.--When the wars come on suddenly, the women and children have no means to escape, but are taken prisoners and sold into slavery. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 614-615)

Law and Lovejoy discuss Mahommah's enslavement in Africa and believe that he was freed by his brother instead of his mother as stated earlier in the narrative.⁶¹ They assume the reason why Mahommah did not describe his African enslavement in detail is that he wanted to "present his own circumstances in the most favorable light" (38). Law and Lovejoy's assumption support the idea that Mahommah wanted to present himself as the "noble savage" as Ayyub and Abdr-Rahman had done. Another assumption by Law and Lovejoy is that:

It is possible, however, that in the U.S.A. he [Mahommah] had become aware that defenders of the slave trade and of slavery in the Americas commonly sought to justify them on the grounds that those

⁶¹ Law and Lovejoy also remark there are contradictions in stories of how Mahommah was taken captive. They review the letters by Mr. and Mrs. Judd, which report that Mahommah was enslaved when he was a child, whereas the *Biography* suggests that he was a young adult. Law and Lovejoy elaborate this argument in the introduction of their book (35-38).

taken were already enslaved in Africa, so that the trade involved merely the transfer of slaves from one continent to another, rather than the enslavement of free persons; and he may have wished to prevent his own case being cited in support of anti-abolitionist propaganda.

(38)

This reason reflects Mahommah's awareness and selectiveness in presenting information in his narrative. This point also deals with authenticity and authorship of the *Biography*, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

A further point worth mentioning is that Mahommah expresses his emotion regarding the horrible experiences he passed through during his African enslavement, the Middle Passage and his New World enslavement. This distinguishes Mahommah from the other enslaved African American Muslims, such as Ayyub, Abdr-Rahman and Omar. Scholars may ascribe Mahommah's attitude to his Islamic identity, as Turkistani claims that unlike other enslaved American Muslims, Mahommah searched for identity and religion (210, 273). This assumption suggests similarity between Gronniosaw and Mahommah in that their enslavements helped them to find their true religious identity. However, throughout the *Biography*, there are indications that Mahommah adhered to Islam even though he had violated some Islamic principles in Africa and the New World, such as drinking wine. Many scholars, such as Austin, Turkistani, Dabovic, Law and Lovejoy, and Horn, believe that Mahommah embraced Islam.⁶² For instance, some indications are keeping his Muslim name as Turkistani (210), Law and Lovejoy remark, mentioning Islamic

⁶² These scholars present varied interpretations regarding Mahommah's Islamic belief. For examples, see (Horn 53), (Law 140) and (Austin, *Transatlantic* 171).

principles, such as the prohibition of eating “swine’s flesh” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 608) and resisting to pray in the style of the Spanish Roman Catholic.⁶³

Mahommah states that his first master:

had a large clock standing in the entry of the house in which were some images made of clay, which were used in worship. We all had to kneel before them; the family in front, and the slaves behind. We were taught to chant some words which we did not know the meaning of. We also had to make the sign of the cross several times. Whilst worshiping, my master held a whip in his hand, and those who showed signs of inattention or drowsiness, were immediately brought to consciousness by a smart application of the whip. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 626-627)

Similar to other enslaved African American Muslims, Mahommah’s conversion is doubtful.

Regarding Mahommah’s relationship with his masters, under the hand of his first master, he worked in building, carrying stones and then as a bread seller. His master was tough on him even though Mahommah tried to gain his trust by being an honest enslaved person. Later on, Mahommah attempted to escape, but he was

⁶³ Mrs. Judd reported her discussion with Mahommah about his resistance to his Catholic master’s order to pray in the latter’s creed. Mahommah says that “this God wood, eh? . . . Well you take e little wood—make a God—go pray for God, eh? . . . Oh! Your God not say e nothing . . . O Mr. _____ very bad, [to] have wooden God. God not like it” (qtd. in Law and Lovejoy 52, 233). Mahommah’s words also suggest an influence of Quranic verses on him, especially the verses that are related to Prophet Ibrahim’s (PBUH) resistance to worship the idols that his tribe believed in. For example, some of these Quranic verses are (6:74-81), (21:52-70) and (26:71-81).

caught. Mahommah did not use the religion as a motivation for his escape as Ayyub and Omar had done. One day his master flogged Mahommah for buying whiskey with the bread money. Mahommah did not submit easily to the punishment and told his master that “he must not whip me any more, and got quite angry, for the thought came into my head that I would kill him, and afterwards destroy myself. I at last made up my mind to drown myself; I would rather die than live to be a slave” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 528). Unlike other enslaved African American Muslims, Mahommah attempted to commit suicide, which is forbidden according to the Islamic principle. He claims that he was “then but a poor heathen, almost as ignorant as a Hottentot, and had not learned the true God, nor any of his divine commandments” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 528). Presumably, even though Mahommah knew Islamic principles, he confessed that he was violating some of them. Or as in Law and Lovejoy’s footnote, the sentence was written by the *Biography*’s author, Samuel Downing Moore⁶⁴ (161). After that, Mahommah was sold to another master, who Mahommah described as a very cruel man, but after a few weeks, he was sold in Rio de Janeiro to a ship’s captain. Also Mahommah tried to gain his new master’s trust. However, the latter did not treat him well. Generally, Mahommah attempted to obtain his masters’ trust as Abdr-Rahman and Omar did.

The African educational system is also mentioned in the *Biography*. Mahommah’s brother was a scholar, however Mahommah himself did not like schools in Africa. His father hoped that Mahommah would be a scholar like his older brother. The *Biography* states that: “the Africans having neither books nor papers, but a board called Wal-la, on which is written a lesson which the pupil is required to

⁶⁴ Moore was a writer, Unitarian minister and abolitionist who came from Ireland and settled in the United States.

learn to read and write before any other is given; when that lesson is learned, the board is cleaned and a new one written” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 611-612). Using the board was for primary stage in West African education, where children use these boards to memorize the Quranic verses. However, there were books for higher levels, as it has been discussed above regarding West Africa textbooks. Most probably, this stage of education that Mahommah received, as in the *Biography*, he states:

School inspection is made in the following manner: A large meeting house, generally a mosque, is selected, whither the pupils repair together with the teachers, who must rend twenty chapters of the Koran, and if the pupil reads the whole twenty chapters, without missing a single word, his education is considered finished and the fees of instruction are immediately paid. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 612).

Most probably Mahommah memorized some of these twenty Quranic chapters. However, Mahommah did not write any Arabic words in his narrative except in one of his letters in 1853, where he wrote three Arabic words (Law and Lovejoy 32), (Law133) and (Austin, *Transatlantic* 169). These three Arabic words are, according to Austin, “‘Allah, Allah, most [or] ever,’ all that he [Mahommah] could recall, perhaps, from the *Bismallah*: ‘In the name of Allah, most benevolent, ever-merciful’” (*Transatlantic* 169). Law and Lovejoy state that these words are “‘*Bismi’ allah al-ra[hman]*” (32). They provide only a translated copy of the letter in the appendix of their book.

Mahommah enrolled for three years at New York Central College mainly for missionary purposes. Therefore, arguably, Mahommah’s *Biography* was influenced

by Christian traditions through his education, and Moore's religiosity; and by his Islamic background. Therefore, regarding the *Biography*, it is insufficient to depend on the Christian influences and Mahommah's Islamic background should be taken into account. Horn emphasizes Moore's influence on the narrative by stating that Mahommah's "story is transcribed, allegedly 'from his own words,' but we must read his text as a work of biography, filtered through the particular consciousness of the transcriber/biographer Samuel Moore" (54). However, Horn's comment does not deny the fact the *Biography* is also influenced by Mahommah's Islamic background. Possibly, Mahommah was influenced by oral Islamic stories since his uncle and his brother were religious men and scholars as the *Biography* states. According to Kane, in West Africa, oral biographies of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are traditionally have been narrated by religious men to people especially on celebrations of the Prophet's birth, *mawlid* (87-88).

2.3.5 Mohammad Ali Ben Said

Said's father, Barca Garna, was a famous cavalry general under Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi, a leader who Said called him "the Washington of Borno [sic]" (4). They fought against the Fulani Muslims, who started in 1810 a serious of wars, *Jihad*, under the leadership of Usman Dan Fodio. These wars led to enslavement. Said mentions another way of enslaving people in his country. For instance, a person "sometimes gambles himself away, that is, he sells himself; he becomes a slave to the winner" (16). Throughout Said's descriptions of the political issues and the practice of slavery, it is clear that some of Islam principles had been violated.

In Chapter 2 of the *Autobiography*, Said narrates his capture. In 1849, when he and his schoolmates were playing, Said was attacked and enslaved by Muslims,

Tuareg riders. According to Said, Tuareg, “Kindil” as he called them, “live almost exclusively by kidnapping slaves and general robbery” (22). He criticizes the Tuareg for not being true Muslims (23). After about ten days of traveling, they reached Katchna, which appeared to be a slave market, and sold Said to a slaveholder Abd-El-Kader. In contrast to the other enslaved African American Muslims who experienced the transatlantic slave trade, Said experienced trans-Saharan slave trade, which according to Said’s description, is not less horrible than the Middle Passage. In Chapter 3, he describes the Sahara Desert by stating that:

This ocean of scorching sand has been so often described by more graphic writers than myself, that I will not attempt to paint it in words. Indeed, a perfect picture in words, or on canvass, is impossible. Sahara must be seen and *felt* to be realized. All along our route we found great numbers of carcasses, human carcasses, completely *dried up* by the scorching rays of the ever unclouded sun. The heat is so great that flesh becomes as *dry* as bone, before it can be dissolved. Here are found no hyenas, no vultures to prey upon the dead, and the traders never bury any one who falls in the desert. The bodies lie until inhumed by the parching sand storms, or until pulverized. It is said that the traders leave these dead bodies exposed to frighten their caravans of slaves into faster walking. (27-28)

During the journey, the captives were allowed to drink water three times per day and eat one meal that “consisted of dates and raw millett [sic] meal, which was also very scanty” (25).

After crossing the desert, Abd-El-Kader learnt that Said was the son of Barca Gana, he subsequently treated Said kindly and promised to send back. Surprisingly, Said replies: "I was, however, unwilling to recross the inhospitable Sahara, but begged him to sell me to the Turks, who I had heard, were very good masters" (29). Thus, Abd-El-Kader sold him to a Turkish man, Abdy-Aga who was from a high social class. For six months, Said was thankful for the treatment of Abdy-Aga. This suggests that he was satisfied being an enslaved person. His master sent Said to Tripoli to Hadji Daoud, Abdy-Aga's father. Said writes that Hadji Daoud "was a good Moslem, none better nor more strict in Tripoli" (39). Said got another chance from the Pasha of Tripoli to go home with his just freed hometown friends. However, Said's master refused and they went to pilgrimage, *Hajj*. Nevertheless, when they came back to Tripoli he states as he was home again, "I was as much delighted at seeing Tripoli again as if it had been Kouka" (59). Unfortunately, his master lost his fortune in a fire and therefore, Hadji Daoud sold Said.

Fuad Pacha who lived in Istanbul became Said's new master. Fuad Pacha, who was the minister of the interior, bought Said to be "a *tchiboudji*, or pipe cleaner" (60). His master's position enabled Said to meet with members of ruling classes. After nine months, his master sold him to Reschid Pacha, who was the Ottoman ambassador to Paris and London and Fuad Pacha's brother-in-law. Even though Said was treated very well, he still had the desire to live as a free person. He states:

I began, this time to think that it was my fate to pass from hand to hand, with never a sure and definite resting place; and, more than once, have I turned my longing eyes to the southward, in the direction of beloved Kouka, and sighed for that rest which I could not find. (66)

Said's *Autobiography* shows that slavery had been practiced widely in Africa and in Asia. Said comments that his new master "unlike most Moslems, associated intimately with the Christians, shook hands with them, ate, drank champagne and visited their theatres, and acted in such a way as to excite my fears that he was not truly Islam" (67). All his Ottoman masters, Abdy-Aga, Hadji Daoud, Fuad Pacha and Reschid Pacha, treated Said well as he remarks that the "chief desire of my life, next to a visit to my home, is the desire I entertain of living among the *Osmanlis* again" (37).

Reschid Pacha presented Said to a Russian Prince, Anatole Mentchikoff, when the latter insisted on buying Said even though it was against Islamic law. Said comments "under the then existing Turkish law, a Mohammed slave could not be sold out of the empire; so the matter was *clandestinely* [sic] compromised by the Pacha presenting me to the Prince" (68). When Said reached Russia, he was freed by the Prince, who was kind to Said and recommended that Said stay in Russia to receive "a good education." Mentchikoff also promised to give Said money and return him to Africa when the latter was twenty-five years old (74). However, when Mentchikoff went to the Crimea War, Said was abused by the former's servants. Therefore, he moved to work as a servant to Prince Nicholas Vassilievitch Troubetzkoÿ, whom Said met when he was under the service of Mentchikoff.

Said declares that he continued practicing Islam even after he left his Muslim masters (78-79). However, Prince Nicholas forced Said to convert to Christianity and in 1855 he was baptized.⁶⁵ Similar to other African American Muslim narrators, the authenticity of Said's faith is doubtful. For instance, Dabovic believes that "Said

⁶⁵ Austin believes that the year when Said was baptized is 1854 (*Transatlantic* 179)

seems to appropriate Christianity as a form of earned cultural capital, which allows him to penetrate new territories and to re-create his identity at an important midpoint between Islamic and Western cultures” (Dabovic, “Out” 71). Dabovic’s interpretation is helpful in understanding Said’s statement, “Reader, do not misunderstand me, I was a Mohammedan; I am now, in belief, a Christian and a Swedenborgian; but I want to see fair play in these matters, let and ‘him who is without guilt cast the first stone’” (38). Horn’s suggestion in reading Said’s *Autobiography* as “cultural syncretism” seems more convincing. He states that:

rather than categorizing these texts [Omar’s *Life*, Mahommah’s *Biography*, and Said’s *Autobiography*] as Muslim or Christian, I propose that readers consider them more expansively as narratives of cultural syncretism, revealing difficult dialogues between competing religious faiths, generative dissonances between linguistic practices, and dialectical exchanges between formerly unimaginable cultural worlds. (Horn 47-48)

Said joined Prince Nicholas to travel to different European countries, such as Italy, Germany, France and England. His travels did not change Said’s desire to return to Africa. Nicholas disregarded Said’s desire by:

stating that I [Said] was no longer an African but a citizen of Europe. He said I could not reconcile myself to the manners and customs of my countrymen. He moreover told me if I would stay with him twenty years he would give me a pension the rest of my days. All this, however, did not deter me from returning to Soudan. (100-101)

Said's position indicates that he had his own identity. He did not allow others whether they were Muslims, Christian, African, Arab, or European to determine what his identity was.

While Said was waiting for a ship to return to Africa, Mr. Rochussen, a South American man, asked Said to work for him and his wife, Mrs. Rochussen, as a valet in their travels for one year. Said agreed and travelled with them to West Indies, the United States, and then Canada, where the couple stole Said's money and ran away. Said was advised by a religious man to go to the United States. Detroit was his first stop, where he worked on a ship and later as a French language teacher for African American children. From 1863 to 1865, Said participated in the Civil War and joined the Massachusetts 55th Infantry Regiment in the Union Army. However, Said did not narrate his involvement in the Civil War. After the War, Said travelled to the Southern States and worked as a lecturer and later on a teacher. He believed that education would change the life of his race, African Americans, "I conceived the idea to go South, where I could be of great use to my benighted people in the capacity of a teacher" (109).

To sum up, Said's masters were all Muslims and he gained his freedom under the service of the Russian Prince, Mentchikoff. His narrative presents accounts regarding the Islamic slavery systems in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Many Islamic principles in these parts of the Islamic world were violated. Said comments that his Muslim masters were kind to him and notices that in general Ottomans were not prejudiced with regard to race or color and "their only prejudice [was] being of a religious character" (37). Dabovic elaborates this point by stating that "[a]lthough Arabs started to develop involved ethnological treatises that argued

for some type of African inferiority, they never adopted any systematic scientific expression of black inhumanity as in the west” (“Displacement” 200). This suggests that Said found a difference between the slavery systems of the Islamic world and the United States, the former depended on religion, whereas the latter depend on race. This basis of Islamic slavery system could also explain Marfo’s statement that, “the reader is left with the impression that under enslavement, Said enjoyed a life akin to if not better than that of an untitled freeman” (1216). Arguably, when Said was under the service of a Muslim master, he felt that he was a free man. Nevertheless, there are moments when Said reveals his desire to go back home and emotions about his freedom, for instance, when Said has to move from one master to another. Although Said experienced enslavement under Muslim masters, he remained attached to Muslims after he left them and gained his freedom. When Said was with Prince Troubetzkoÿ, he heard that the Russian army lost Sebastopol against the Ottoman army, Said comments: “I could hardly repress my exultation, for my sympathies were with the Osmanlis” (88).

Education is a noticeable theme in Said’s *Autobiography*. Said was around fourteen years old when he studied and excelled in the Arabic language, reading, writing and comprehension (20). He was at the beginning of his third year in school when the Tuareg raiders imprisoned him, but his enslavement and travels paved for him the way to acquire more knowledge and learn other different languages. In the Preface of his *Autobiography*, he declares that he could speak and write nine languages: Kanouri, his mother tongue, Mandra, Arabic, Turkish, Russian, German, Italian and French, and English (2). Austin claims that Said “appears to have impressed his owners with his dignified bearing, and he naturally sought rich and educated masters whose demands might be above those of lesser ones, and from

whom he might learn and whose books he might read” (Austin, *Sourcebook* 661). Said keeps mentioning throughout the autobiography educational and cultural institutions, such as universities, colleges, and libraries. Also he refers to his educational and intellectual development and mentions different authors, poets and literary works from different cultures, such as French and Russian literatures. Even though Said “as far as possible, refrained from the use of foreign words and phrases,” he confesses that “[p]ure English can hardly be expected from one who has to choose his words and phrases from” different languages (2). It worth mentioning here that Said refers to Abu Abdullah Muhammad Al-Idrisi’s comment on educational institutes in Makkah (53). Al-Idrisi (1099-1165) was a Muslim geographer, cartographer, and poet who travelled to different parts of the world. Al-Idrisi’s famous book is *Kitab Nuzhat Al-Mushtaq fi Khtiraq Al-'Afaq*, translated and published under different titles *The Book of Pleasant Journeys into Faraway Lands* and *The Pleasure of Him who Longs to Cross the Horizons*. Presumably, Said was influenced in writing his autobiography as a travel narrative by Al-Idrisi.

After acquiring knowledge, Said wanted to use his knowledge to the benefit of the American society during the Reconstruction Era. He believed that there was a need for education even though he was disappointed by some African Americans for not appreciating education, “But alas! though painful to say, it is sadly true that my people here appreciate but slightly the benefits of education” (115). Eventually, his ambition led him to open his own school. Said’s *Autobiography* had been influenced by multicultural literatures as a result of his previous connections with different cultures and literatures. Indeed his narrative mirrors the fundamental feature of the society in which he published his work.

2.4 Conclusion

The discussion of enslaved African American Muslims shows that they did not present a unified attitude to their enslavements in a religious context. Yet, this fact does not lessen the importance of the Islamic perspective in their narratives. Also, their educational background helped some of them in shaping their narratives. Considering the socio-historical perspective, it provides a way of understanding and appreciating these writings as literary works rather than mere historical documents, which advances the case for their canonization in American literature. The following chapters categorize these selected enslaved African American Muslims according to three periods of the slave narrative, pre-antebellum, antebellum and postbellum slave narratives, and examine characteristics of their writings.

Chapter 3: Pre-antebellum (Early) Slave Narratives - Positioning Ayyub Ben Suleiman's Testimony

Allan Austin in his book *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (1997) subtitled his chapter on Ayyub “African Nobleman and a Father of African American Literature” (51). Muhammad Al-Ahari states that *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* (1734) “is perhaps the earliest biography of any African-Americans” (12). However, William Andrews as well as other scholars consider 1760 to be the year of the appearance of the slave narrative as a genre. This chapter aims to position Ayyub’s testimony in the light of arguments of inclusion and exclusion made by scholars in American literature. It also discusses the early characteristics of slave narratives and analyzes *Some Memoirs* in order to position it in the American literary canon.

3.1 Ayyub’s Testimony and Slave Narrative Criticism

Marion Starling states in her study, *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History*, that “the slave narrative records extend from 1703 to 1944” (xviii) and the first slave narrative was *Adam Negro’s Tryall* (50). However, Briton Hammon’s *A Narrative of the Most Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man*, which was published in 1760, has been treated as the primary slave narrative.⁶⁶ Keith Michael Green comments that Hammon’s narrative “has been recognized as the first slave narrative published in North America” (101). Then, Green in his article’s endnotes elaborates on the

⁶⁶ For instance, William Andrews remarks, in his book *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American autobiography, 1760-1865*, the publication of Hammon’s narrative in 1760 marks the primary appearance of the genre of African American autobiography (1, 18).

discussion about the first slave narrative. He remarks that most scholars, such as Philip Gould, William Andrews and Rifia Calls, believe that Hammon's narrative is the earliest account, except Starling who holds that *Adam Negro's Tryall* (1703), "the court record of a New England slave's freedom suit against his master, John Saffin," is the first slave narrative (119). However, Frances Smith Foster in her study *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives* believes that considering *Adam Negro's Tryall* as a slave narrative "is certainly an exaggeration of the term" and instead she looks at it as "a precursor of the slave narratives" which has elements that make it "of great importance to the history of the development of the slave narrative" (32).

Some Memoirs of the Life of Job the Son of Solomon, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa; Who was a Slave About Two Years in Maryland; and Afterwards Being Brought to England, was Set Free, and Sent to His Native Land in the Year (1734) was written by a European man, Thomas Bluett,⁶⁷ before American independence. Despite these two facts, Allan Austin considers Ayyub the "father of African American Literature" (51) and Muhammad Al-Ahari includes the narrative among "Muslim slave narratives" and states that the testimony "is perhaps the earliest biography of any African-Americans" (12). Al-Ahari adds that the account "was definitely the first slave narrative offered by sale through advertising in a newspaper" (12). However, many scholars, such as Emmanuel Nelson and Clenora Hudson-Weems, consider Lucy Terry's poem "Bars Fight" written in 1746 and published in 1855 as "the oldest literary work written by an African American"

⁶⁷ Thomas Bluett was an Englishman who met Ayyub when the latter was imprisoned in Maryland. According to Austin's *Sourcebook* (1984), Bluett was a minister in Maryland. Ayyub sailed to England with Bluett.

(Nelson xiv).⁶⁸ Vincent Carretta, in his essay “Back to the Future: Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Black Authors,” discusses the problem in the usage of the term of “African American” to describe eighteenth-century writers who were writing prior to the independence of the United States including those who were against the American Revolution (i.e. Black Loyalists) and those who chose to live and later died outside the United States, like Olaudah Equiano and Gronniosaw (11). Therefore, according to his argument, neither Ayyub ben Suleiman nor his account should be labelled African American, whereas Terry has been considered African American since she lived after American independence. Arguably, this is the same reason why Starling does not discuss Ayyub’s testimony in her study. Also, Ayyub was enslaved by colonial Europeans and not by Americans, another reason to not to use the label “American” to describe him and other African American Muslims who were enslaved at this period.

The argument for using the term “African American” for eighteenth-century ex-enslaved and enslaved African narrators is still controversial. For instance, while some critics claim that Hammon was Afro-British, some scholars, such as Hudson-Weems, believe that Hammon was an African American (117). Identity of early enslaved authors is a major factor in the “unsettling critical ramifications of positioning early black writing within the larger, national ‘story’ of African American literary history” (Carretta and Gould 11). According to Babacar M’Baye, Michael Gomez considers “the year of 1830 as the period of transformation of blacks in the United States into African Americans through the forging of African

⁶⁸ See also Hudson-Weems (118) and April Langley (*The Black* 142).

‘ethnicity’ into ‘race’” (6).⁶⁹ Therefore, these “ramifications” regarding the identity of eighteenth-century enslaved and ex-enslaved Africans writers, as Carretta remarks in another article “Early African-American Literature?” “have fallen between the cracks in turf divided by American and British literature specialists: they have been either largely ignored by both camps or claimed by one because of certain characteristics that are emphasized at the expense of others” (101). Instead, Carretta calls for a transatlantic approach in studying these narrators (“Early” 101, 104) and names them “transatlantic Black writers” along with April Langley who labels them “Afro-British-American writers” (“The Eighteenth-Century” 55). Similarly, Gould (“Early” 107), M’Baye (7) and other scholars enroll the writings of eighteenth-century enslaved and ex-enslaved Africans under a unique category, “early black literature” and “black Atlantic literature.” Also, regarding Ayyub, Florance Marfo argues that “the designation ‘African American,’ . . . may well be an inadequate description of Ayyub, but is no less so when applied to narrators that are commonly included in anthologies of narratives by Black slaves” (1214). This present study uses the term “African American” in the context of Africans who experienced slavery in colonial and independent America or those who published in America. Ayyub experienced his enslavement in America and where he wrote a letter in Arabic to his father to redeem him. Henry Gates claims that the letter is “[o]ne early eighteenth-century slave’s experiences represent the relationship between freedom and literacy dramatically and more directly, indeed, than would seem possible”

⁶⁹ A study that is worth mentioning here is Langley’s *The Black Aesthetic Unbound: Theorizing the Dilemma of Eighteenth-Century African Literature*. She attempts to discuss and investigate “what is African in African American Literature.” She discusses eighteenth-century poets and writers, such as Wheatley, Gronniosaw, Equiano and Terry.

(*Figures 12*). This letter was translated into English.⁷⁰ *Some Memoirs* was written in England.

Florence Marfo's article "African Muslims in African American Literature" discusses reasons why commentators have excluded the early narratives of enslaved African American Muslims from anthologies of African American literature (1213). One of these reasons, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is the possibility that a work was written by a western writer. This can lead to the claim that the narrative is not authentic enough and consequently does not convey the genuine emotions of a slave because the writer is not an enslaved person himself. Marfo cites as an example *Some Memoirs*. However, many narratives by enslaved and ex-enslaved African Americans were not written by them. For instance, Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's narrative was not written by Gronniosaw himself as its title shows, rather it was "committed to paper by the elegant pen of a young LADY of the town of LEOMINSTER" (3). What is more, the issue of authenticity and authority has been questioned even concerning well-known self-authored narratives, such as by Equiano, Solomon Northup and other enslaved and ex-enslaved narrators.

From the perspective of a literary genre, Foster discusses Ayyub and the account in the context of the colonial literature and concludes that *Some Memoirs* belongs to a biographical narrative which is different from slave narratives. In fact, she approaches slave narratives through the definition of "first-person accounts of life in slavery and the pursuit of freedom similar to but distinct from other autobiographical writing would remain" (xxviii). According to her, the genre of slave narratives is only autobiographical. However, Charles Davis and Henry Gates's

⁷⁰ Douglas Grant writes about Ayyub's letter and its translation (84-85).

definition of slave narratives as “the attempts of blacks to *write themselves into being*” (xxiii) leads to start with an anonymous article about Ayyub in their book *The Slave’s Narratives*. These critics’ perspectives indicate how a certain approach in studying slave narratives can affect the definition of the genre and therefore the including and excluding of some work. Ronald Judy discusses Ayyub’s account and in particular Bilali Muhammad’s (Ben Ali) manuscript and their inclusion in American literature. Generally, African American Muslim slave writings can be understood as a message, “since I am literate and can write, I should be free” even though some do not convey it directly. This understanding accords with Davis and Gates’s definition. According to this definition, Ayyub’s account along with other narratives by enslaved African American Muslims should be included in American literature.

3.2 General Characteristics of Early Slave Narrative (Proto-slave Narrative)

Starling states that “[t]he slave narrative records . . . are to be discovered in judicial records, broadsides, private printings, abolitionist newspapers and volumes, scholarly journals, church records, unpublished collections and a few regular publications” (xvii). Besides Hammon, other widely discussed eighteenth-century slave narrators are James Albert, or Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1770), John Marrant (1785) and Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa (1791). Even though 1760 has been considered as the year emergence of the of slave narrative genre,⁷¹ there is not a firm

⁷¹ Foster claims that the genre of slave narrative appeared by the end of the eighteenth-century in 1780s. She discusses Hammon’s and Marrant’s narratives among colonial literature which have some features of slave narratives. She classifies the narratives to colonial literature, early national literature and antebellum literature. Her discussion on the eighteenth-century slave narrative refers to late eighteenth slave narrative (early national literature) since she discusses Hammon’s and Marrant’s narratives among colonial literature.

definition of early slave narratives. In his article “Back to the Future: Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Black Authors,” Carretta suggests how hard it is to give a conclusive definition of the eighteenth-century slave narratives because of their complexity. He discusses Hammon’s, Gronniosaw’s, Marrant’s, and David George’s (1791), Venture Smith’s (1798) and Equiano’s narratives. Generally, early slave narratives are called spiritual autobiographies, biographies, conversion narratives, captivity narratives, slave narratives, or confession narratives. Regarding Equiano’s narratives, Carretta claims that his narrative is “[a] remarkable achievement, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to classify in terms of its genre. Among other things, it is a spiritual autobiography, captivity narrative, travel book, adventure tale, rags-to-riches saga, economic treatise, apologia, testimony, and slave narrative” (“Back” 17). Here Carretta distinguishes slave narrative as a genre in itself. Likewise, Andrews and Gould remark on different classifications of early slave narratives. For instance, Gould states that slave narratives were “more generically fluid. They were published and read as many things at once” (“The Rise” 13, 21).

Regarding the structure of eighteenth and nineteenth-century slave narratives, they start with a preface or a letter which was written by a respected European or American person. The purpose of these remarks was to vouch for the authenticity of the account and morality of the ex-enslaved narrator. Commonly, the early slave narrative follows a chronological order and use straightforward and accessible language in order to “amuse its readers while encouraging them in their humanitarian and religious efforts (Foster 45).

The anti-slavery argument in early slave narratives is not always clear or direct. Unlike antebellum slave narratives which purposed to argue against the

institution of slavery, itself, early slave narratives aimed to criticize the transatlantic slave trade and show themes of morality, equality and justice. Possibly, focusing on these themes was a result of the prevailing religious perspective which was perhaps the main themes in early slave narratives.⁷² Carretta discusses the historical background of the religious movement the Great Awakening in the 1730s, a “transatlantic evangelical Christian movement,” originating in England, and its influences on eighteenth-century slave narratives (“Back” 13). Foster describes that:

Eighteenth-century slave narratives emphasized the individual,^[73] and for the most part they reflected the Puritan theocentric society. Race was a factor in the narrator’s manner and matter, but it was not at first a crucial element. Their emphasis was upon a theme more easily identified with all heirs to Judeo-Christian philosophy, the struggle for existence as strangers in an inhospitable land. (44)

Religion also affected the style of early slave narratives. Early slave narrators quoted from the Holy Bible. Hammon’s narrative is a religious autobiography. Gronniosaw’s narrative also serves as a good example which discusses how his enslavement was the way to obtain his religious identity, a Christian. Gould remarks that eighteenth-century slave narratives, such as those by Marrant, Jupiter Hammon, Prince Hall, Lemuel Haynes were clearly influenced by “Corinthians 3:17 . . . ‘Now

⁷² Even though that religion was used to defend and justify slavery by pro-slavery supporters.

⁷³ Similarly, Starling Bland believes that early slave narratives focused on the individual. However, she claims that they “were an indirect product of Enlightened thinking, emphasizing fundamental, individual freedoms— whether religious, intellectual, political, or social” (8).

the Lord is that spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty” (“The Rise” 14). The narrator developed spiritually, personally and intellectually throughout the narrative. Starling Bland states in the introduction to *African American Slave Narratives: An Anthology* that early slave narratives have religious components, whereas nineteenth-century slave narratives appear to be more politically motivated in revealing the anti-slavery theme even though some narratives continued to present the religious perspective (7-8).

A significant concept in the eighteenth-century slave narrative is idea of the “noble savage.” The slave or ex-slave appears to be educated and to behave in a refined manner, especially those who came from a high social class in their land of origin. The late seventeenth-century novel *Oroonoko* (1688) by Aphra Behn strongly presents the “noble savage” theme. Foster, Andrews, Philip Curtin and Safet Dabovic as well as Werner Sollors in his introduction to Equiano’s narrative (xvi), all draw attention toward the idea of the noble savage and narrators of early slave narratives. For example, Foster in this context states that “[t]he savage but noble concept that was so popular in eighteenth-century racial thought could explain the eighteenth-century narratives’ predilection for highborn African narrators” (46).

Commonly, the plots of eighteenth-century slave narratives, as Foster states start with an exposition—“with accounts of the slave life before captivity.” Information, such as the narrator’s name, family and place is provided in this part. Rising actions depict slave’s kidnapping, captivity and his life in slavery and accompanying ill-treatment. “The narratives climaxes with [the captives’] rescue from slavery and a spiritual or material reward for the hardships encountered” (45). Generally, early slave narratives as a genre do not have a fixed definition. Typically

through religious perspectives, these narratives discuss the themes of equality and justice more than the anti-slavery theme. In a chronological order, the plots trace the enslaved narrators' lives from before their enslavement to the moment of obtaining freedom and convey their spiritual and intellectual development over the course of the narratives. The question that arises here is to what extent the characteristics or traditions of Ayyub's testimony share the general characteristics of early slave narrative.

3.3 Analysis and Characteristics of Ayyub's Testimony

Ayyub asked Thomas Bluett to write down his account which consists of a letter, an introduction, four sections and a conclusion. In the letter, Ayyub requested Bluett "to write an Account of him" to the Duke of Montague "as an Acknowledgment of your GRACE's great Humanity and Goodness" to Ayyub (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 75).⁷⁴ The letter, as Austin states, is an "obligatory flattering dedication to the Duke" (*Transatlantic* 53). The letter conveys the motivation for writing this account. This can suggest the narrative does not carry an antislavery purpose as Foster claims that "[t]he emphasis [of the account] is upon some experiences of the man and his travels and not upon the issue of slavery" (34). Alternatively, there could be other different motivations and purposes for writing this account, one Ayyub's motivation and the other is Bluett's. From Ayyub's desire to present the testimony to the Duke, it can be understood as he wanted to convey the issue of enslavement of such Africans, as the following sections of the account reveal, and his good character and civilized African hometown to a white political leader. Consequently, the Duke could possibly share Ayyub's testimony with his

⁷⁴ Some words in Ayyub's account are capitalized as in the original source. Here, I use Ayyub's account which appears in Austin's *Sourcebook* (1984).

friends and change some existing racial stereotypes concerning Africans and the issue of slavery. Arguably, this might be the same reason why Ayyub preferred his testimony to be written in English even though he was able to write his narrative in Arabic. The possibility of his English testimony to be read by Europeans and Americans would be greater than that of his Arabic testimony. Additionally, this assumption supports Andrews's claim that "from the outset of black autobiography in America the presupposition reigns that a black narrator needs a white reader to complete his text, to build a hierarchy of abstract significance on the mere matter of his facts, to supply a presence where was only, 'Negro,' only a dark absence" (*To Tell* 32-33). Therefore, possibly Ayyub wanted his narrative to be read by Western readers and not only by the Duke. Douglas Grant believes that Francis Moore's account⁷⁵ *Travels Into the Inland Parts of Africa* (1738) and *Some Memoirs* made Ayyub "a significant figure in the battle against slavery" (143). A further reason for Ayyub's intention in giving the account to the Duke is that he presumably wanted his testimony to be received by a respected political personage at that time. This intention is consistent with stating the purpose of the letter or preface in early slave narratives. What is more, Bluett's positive reflections on Ayyub continue to appear throughout the testimony, for instance Section Four and the Conclusion, also give acknowledgement to Ayyub for contemporary Western readers.

The Introduction of the testimony also extends the acknowledgment of Ayyub by referring to him as "this *African Gentleman*" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 77). The Introduction discusses the agreement between Bluett and Ayyub in writing the testimony. Bluett states that they were "agreeable to the Information he [Ayyub]

⁷⁵ Francis Moore was an English factor of the Royal African Company. His account reveals information about Ayyub after his return to Africa.

had given me at different Times, and to the Truth of the Facts, which I had either been a Witness to, or personally concerned in upon his Account” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 76-77). The Introduction reveals the purpose of the account. Bluett elaborates the purpose of the testimony, thus:

at least it cannot but be agreeable to those Persons, who were pleased to do kind Offices to this Stranger, merely from a Principle of Humanity, before any particular Account of him could be had. Therefore I have at length resolved to communicate to the World such Particulars of the Life and Character of this African Gentleman, as I think will be most useful and entertaining; intending to advance nothing as Fact, but what I either knew to be such, or have had from JOB’s [Ayyub] own Mouth. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 77)

Two issues occur here concerning the testimony’s purpose and genre. Regarding the purpose, it is also related to the above double motivations of Ayyub and Bluett. Even though Bluett states the entertainment purpose of the testimony, the claim about Ayyub’s intention of the account presented by Bluett cannot be justified. In fact, Bluett misunderstood some facts which Ayyub had told him.⁷⁶ Curtin asserts that the

⁷⁶ For example, Bluett states in the account that revelation of the Holy Quran to “Ababuker, some time before *Muhammad* was born” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 90), which is false. In addition, Curtin comments that “[t]he conflict between tradition and Ayuba’s account immediately raises the question whether he was lying, or whether Bluett simply misunderstood him” (27). Bluett confesses his weakness in presenting information:

I Don’t pretend here, as I hinted before, to trouble the Reader or myself with a full and regular History of JOB’s [Ayyub’s] Country. Those who have the Curiosity to inform themselves more particularly in the History of those Parts of the World, may consult the Voyages that are already published on that Subject. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 84)

different cultures between Bluett and Ayyub affected the conveyed information, “many [narratives] were recorded, and no doubt edited, by a Western writer who passed them through the filter of different cultures and imperfect knowledge of a common language” (7). According to Foster it is Bluett’s motivation, “for publishing the story as one way of giving public thanks to those who had befriended the black man without knowing the details of his life” (34). This can suggest that Ayyub told Bluett about the topics and ideas which he wanted to include in the account. Therefore, this narrative can be considered like other later amanuensis slave narratives. Two differences between this account and other amanuensis slave narratives are that this account was written in a third-person narration and the writer’s role is obviously more than the roles of ghost writers and editors of other slave narratives.⁷⁷

The second issue that concerns the testimony genre is that while Foster (35) and Al-Ahari (12) believe the account to be a biography, Ronald Judy claims it is a “‘*reported* autobiography’ . . . (which Bluett swears was faithfully recorded from the mouth of Ayyub)” (154). However, Bluett states in the letter regarding the account that “I am very sensible the imperfections of it are many; but hope our GRACE will pardon them, especially as I have not been us’d to such Matters as these. The Facts I

See also Dabovic (“Displacement” 24) and Grant (143).

⁷⁷ Foster believes that Bluett used third-person narration to separate him from Ayyub. This might suggest the possibility that Bluett was among “whites [who] condemned slavery in their writings, [but] they rarely affirmed the completed human[ity]” of the enslaved or ex-enslaved narrator (33). She states that using the techniques of first-person narration was a step of accepting an enslaved and ex-enslaved person as a writer and the “willingness of white audience to acknowledge” this narrator as an eligible writer (39). Alternatively, using third-person narration technique provides more indication and acknowledgment of the account and Ayyub as a character.

have inserted, are what I had by JOB's [Ayyub's] particular information, or from my own Knowledge" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 75-76). In fact, Foster emphasizes on defining slave narrative as a first-person narration (xxviii), and she describes *Some Memoirs* as Bluett's account, "biographical narrative" and "factual account" (33, 35) in which it is different from the slave narrative genre. The argument of considering the testimony as biography suggests that Ayyub was not able to write his autobiography, which reinforces Sylviane Diouf's claim that enslaved African Muslims did not exercise writing autobiography (*Servants* 203). *Some Memoirs* should be seen as autobiography and biography at the same time. It is autobiography from the perspective that some information of the testimony is conveyed by Ayyub and he took part in writing it. The testimony as biography is from the perspective of the writer and editor of the work, Thomas Bluett. This study defines the slave narrative as biographies, semi-autobiographies and autobiographies, which were written by or related to enslaved African American Muslims. Therefore, the argument is made here that Ayyub's testimony is a slave narrative.

Section One of the testimony entitled "An Account of the Family of JOB [Ayyub]; his Education; and the more remarkable Circumstances of his Life, before he was taken Captive," is the exposition of the narrative. This section starts with a discussion of the establishment of Ayyub's town, Bundu, and its regulations. Bundo was established half a century ago "as a safety zone for every Muslim (all who could 'read and know God') fleeing slavery" (Austin, *Transatlantic* 54). Then, it discusses Ayyub's religious education, as mentioned in Chapter 2, and political and social status in his homeland. The end of this section mentions Ayyub's wives and children. It is strongly suggested in this section that Ayyub and Bluett tried to construct the theme of the noble savage of Ayyub's character through the represented information.

Section Two is the longest among the four sections. This section combines the rising actions, the climax and falling action of the narrative plot as is conveyed from its title, “Of the Manner of his being taken Captive; and what followed upon it, till his Return.” Ayyub’s capture and his life under slavery have been discussed in Chapter 2. The rising actions, as it has mentioned earlier, are also about the narrator’s life in slavery and its harshness. In fact, the part of Ayyub’s life under slavery in America is short compared to the rest of the account. Austin comments that “‘the slave narrative’ section takes up only one and a half pages out of fifty-four” (*Transatlantic* 54). The number of pages is not of great significant since Ayyub does convey his enslavement experience.

Ayyub’s letter to his father, which Gates claims as an early account that reflects “the relationship between freedom and literacy” (*Figures* 12), was intended to be given to Captain Pike in order that he deliver it to Africa, but he had already left for England. Ironically, by the time the letter was sent to England, Captain Pike had left for Africa. The philanthropist James Oglethorpe, who read this letter in its subsequent English translation, sympathized with Ayyub. Oglethorpe agreed with William Hunt, a merchant, to purchase Ayyub’s freedom and when the latter arrived in England, Oglethorpe would pay back Hunt his money. When Ayyub was on his voyage, he started to learn English. He made a significant progress in acquiring the language. His ability to learn the English language also can be considered as an element of the noble savage trope. However, his illness hindered his progress in the English language. When Ayyub arrived in England, Oglethorpe had left for America. Ayyub was worried that Hunt might sell him into slavery. The Royal African Company reimbursed Hunt for redeeming Ayyub out of slavery and taking Ayyub to

England. However, Ayyub did not feel he was a free person yet because he was under the protection of the Royal African Company.

The climax is when Ayyub became a free person. Bluett with the help of his friends and gentlemen who met Ayyub paid the sum of money to the Royal African Company. The falling actions of early slave narratives, as Foster claims, are “the spiritual or material reward” (45). Here in Ayyub’s testimony, the falling actions are his material reward in meeting English noblemen and his return to Africa. He was given a golden watch as well as tools and machines which could improve the standard of living of Ayyub’s society. These gifts were estimated at about 500 pounds sterling. Arguably, therefore, Ayyub’s testimony focuses on the material reward more than the spiritual reward. However, from a religious perspective, the material reward can also be considered as providence.

Section Two seems to be the end of the slave narrative, but Ayyub and Bluett continue to write two more sections and a conclusion. These sections are important in emphasizing the idea of the noble savage and the conclusion conveys an anti-racist position via a religious perspective. In Section Three “Some Observations, as related by JOB [Ayyub], concerning the Manners and Opinions of his Countrymen,” Bluett writes about subjects of marriage, burial, hunting, courage and religious beliefs of Ayyub’s homeland. This section appears to be more to entertain and inform the reader as Bluett states as the purpose of the testimony in the letter. More than for the purpose of entertainment, these topics of courage and religious identity, in particular, are supportive elements in constructing the theme of the noble savage.

The theme clearly continues in Section Four, “Of JOB’s [Ayyub’s] Person and Character,” through its listing of Ayyub’s physical, intellectual and religious

characteristics. Regarding his physical features, they are presented as “being very different from that of the Negroes commonly brought from Africa” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 88). This statement implies a pro-slavery position by not criticizing the institution of slavery. It, however, suggests indirectly that the enslavement of such Africans as Ayyub is an unfair act. Intellectually, Ayyub was an educated man, depended on reasoning in his judgment, and had a retentive memory; he wrote down three copies of the Holy Quran from memory. Even though Ayyub did not master the English language, local people who met him were able to understand him when he conversed with them. In terms of belief, Ayyub was a devout follower of a monotheistic faith. He was equally knowledgeable about Christianity and its association with Islam through their common prophets and their message. Austin claims that enslaved Muslims had a profound education and faith, and because of their monotheistic religion and their literacy, some Western intellectuals and thinkers described these Muslims as Arabs rather than Africans, “Negros” (*Transatlantic* 13). Clearly, the testimony reflects that Ayyub is different from non-Muslim Africans in terms of his religion and literacy. Another indication of distinction between Ayyub and other non-Muslim Africans, is his practice of selling enslaved people before his own enslavement. As Grant observes, Ayyub appears as a “sympathetic,” yet “paradoxical” character for practicing slavery (144). In sum, Curtin remarks that idea of the noble savage in Ayyub’s testimony “in outline has the classic elements of many later works” (17).

The Conclusion, “Containing Some Reflections upon the whole,” comes as a critique against eighteenth-century racial philosophies from a religious perspective.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ See also Austin (*Transatlantic* 58-59).

Bluett writes that God is the One who wisely governs the world, whereas human beings altogether are not able to understand the wisdom of God and the “secret Springs of Nature.” Therefore, the slave trade was a human invention and practitioners of it believed that they would benefit the world, but it did not. Even though the account does not carry a direct anti-slavery, Ayyub and Bluett’s morality were influenced by their religious beliefs, both were religious men. Also, the Conclusion emphasizes the fact that Ayyub had a religious perspective regarding his enslavement, similar to that found in early slave narratives. Ayyub was influenced by religious stories in which he “frequently compared himself to Joseph, believing that it was not the Mandingoes, but God ‘who brought him into a strange Land’” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 92). This can be related to the Judeo-Christian belief of redemption from slavery which was also a characteristic of early slave narrative. Marfo claims “the metaphor of the Promised Land that runs throughout fugitive slave narratives might have its origins in early narratives by Muslims” (1220). The Holy Quran tells the story of Prophet Joseph (PBUH), in Chapter 12, which is titled by his name, “Yusuf.” Religious perspectives, in this context using Biblical and Quranic stories in slave narratives, could suggest some similarities between the narratives of Muslim and non-Muslim African American slave narrative genre.

Some Memoirs also indicates that many Africans had religion and education and were not as depicted by contemporary racial philosophies aimed to justify slavery. Arguably, Bluett and Ayyub may consider giving this religious topic against racial theories as the last impression or message to the reader. Generally, the analysis reveals that the plot and characteristics of testimony are similar to those of early slave narratives. Locating *Some Memoirs* in Robert Stepto’s phases of narration in the slave narrative, as discussed in Chapter 2, it fits the first phase of narration as an

eclectic narrative. This type of narrative has voices of and was written by abolitionists and slaveholders who tell the story of the enslaved person (*From Behind* 3-4). Thus, since Ayyub's testimony was written by Bluett and it is in third-person narration, it strongly reflects the eclectic narrative type.

3.4 Conclusion: Positioning Ayyub's Testimony

The questions of authority and identity of *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* have led to arguments that range between positioning it as the pioneer slave narrative and excluding it from anthologies of African American literature. Foster states that "[i]f one is familiar with nineteenth-century slave narratives, it is almost impossible to believe that Bluett's account [*Some Memoirs*] is about the same institution" since colonial slavery was different from antebellum slavery (35). She claims that Ayyub's "factual account" was a step toward the development of a literary form of anti-slavery literature (33). Marfo states that *Some Memoirs* "cannot properly be defined as a piece written by an African Muslim, but can, however, be more modestly described as a text that forms part of the early African American narrative tradition" (1214). However, the characteristics and traditions of the testimony share strong similarities with the conventions of eighteenth and nineteenth-century slave narratives. In alignment with these conventions, Austin believes that *Some Memoirs* might provide "a conceptual model, in part at least, for overlooked aspects of later African and African American memoirs or narratives" (*Transatlantic* 59).

The idea of the noble savage is clearly presented in the testimony; Ayyub's social status in the title of the account as "*the High Priest of Boonda in Africa*" and his refined manners and positive characteristics throughout the account. The testimony indicates that Africans are humans, civilized, have the ability to read and

write, and many if not all, believe in religions.⁷⁹ This is evidence which falsifies contemporary colonial racial stereotypes about Africans. Also, the testimony highlights the importance of literacy which is an important theme in early and classic slave narratives. The theme of seeking for freedom, which is a significant trope in the nineteenth-century slave narrative, appears in Ayyub's testimony through his plea for personal freedom and Muslim community. In support of this fact, Marfo states that Ayyub's testimony "is a petition for his freedom on the grounds of his inadaptability to American slavery" (1215). Besides the clear religious perspective of the testimony, it attempts to deal with a political aspect though presenting the account which conveys such a civilized African to a European leader which may lead to a political change in view on slavery. Therefore, the testimony combines two perspectives of early and antebellum slave narrative, the religious and political perspectives.

These characteristics support including *Some Memoirs* in American literature since it has elements of early and some antebellum slave narratives. Ayyub's testimony should be included in American literature as part of colonial American literary history. It, also, demonstrates how form and themes had evolved in the slave narrative as a genre. Gould states that "the first black autobiographers largely wrote within the norms of 'civilized' or 'Christian' identity— one that was more often than not associated directly with 'Englishness'" ("The Rise" 12). Gould's general statement neglects other black religious identities in American literary history. Despite the fact that his narrative was written down by an Englishman, Ayyub's testimony serves as a good example of presenting Islamic identity. Therefore, the

⁷⁹ See also Austin (*Transatlantic* 59).

characteristics of Ayyub's account should be considered as a call to widen the definition of the genre of slave narrative. A step toward that is Davis and Gates's decision to start with an article about the life of Ayyub in their book *The Slave's Narratives*.

Chapter 4: The Antebellum Slave Narrative - Comparison of Douglass's *Narrative* and Narratives by Enslaved African American Muslims

Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) is the most anthologized and accordingly best known slave narrative in the American literary canon. Even though some scholars recognize some similarities between Douglass's text and those by enslaved African American Muslims, the latter have not been included in the American literary canon. Examples of studies that have attempted to position Muslim slave narratives in American literature are Allan Austin's *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (1984) and *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (1998), Ronald Judy's *(Dis)forming the American Canon: African-Arabic Slave Narratives and the Vernacular* (1993), Marc Shell and Werner Sollors's *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations* (2000), and Safet Dabovic's dissertation "Displacement and the Negotiation of an American Identity in African Muslim Slave Narratives" (2009). Based on a review of this scholarship as well as studies of Douglass's *Narrative*, this chapter provides a comparative study, which in particular, focuses on its characteristics and canonicity. The comparison of Douglass's *Narrative* with narratives by enslaved African American Muslims, Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, Omar ibn Said and Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, evaluates their importance for and to American literature. Before addressing these points, it is first important to outline the rationale for choosing Douglass's *Narrative* and present the discussion of his identity.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845) is Douglass's first published text. He wrote two other autobiographical narratives, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, which has two versions (1881) and (1892). The fundamental rationale for focusing on Douglass's *Narrative* is its prominent position as a classic slave narrative. For instance, Marion Wilson Starling entitles her fifth chapter "The Most Important Slave Narrative" to describe the position of Douglass's *Narrative* in American literary history. Likewise, James Olney declares that *Narrative* "is at once the best example, the exceptional case, and the supreme achievement" (54) and he considers it as representative of the slave narrative genre (51). Robert Levine argues in his book *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* that the amount of attention paid to Douglass's *Narrative* has led to the marginalization of his other two autobiographies (2, 5-6).⁸⁰

Furthermore, of all of Douglass's works, the *Narrative* is widely acknowledged to be the most reflective of the slave narrative genre. For instance, Olney, in his article's endnotes (68), and Frances Foster categorizes Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) as slave narrative. Foster explains that Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* reaches "beyond the traditional slave narrative" because of different themes and its depiction of events after Douglass had gained his freedom. Regarding *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, she considers it to be "a traditional autobiography" (148). Foster supports this claim by stating that by the time Douglass's *Life and Times* was written, "the era of slave narrative had passed" (148). Echoing Foster and Olney, Rachel Blumenthal, in her article "Canonicity, Genre, and the Politics of Editing: How We Read Frederick Douglass," claims along with other

⁸⁰ Rachel Blumenthal has a similar argument regarding Douglass's *Narrative* compared to his later autobiographies.

scholars that Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) is more of a slave narrative than his later revisions, *My Bondage and My Freedom* and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, which are considered autobiographies in more general terms (186-187). Blumenthal remarks that the representation of the abolitionist Garrison in Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) is a factor that warrants it to be categorized as a slave narrative rather an autobiography:

The autobiography embodies a generic break from the white abolitionist-mediated slave narrative. No longer does the fugitive slave only *represent* the sufferings of an entire slave population. No longer is his body a *text* available for the reading and editing pleasure of white abolition. The autobiography, finally, marks a break with the post-slavery bondage of black writing at the hands of white editors.
(187)

Olney points out that Douglass's *Narrative* is the only autobiography among African American slave narratives (65). As discussed in Chapter 2, slave narratives can also be and often are autobiographical writings.

Before comparing Douglass to enslaved African American Muslims, it is important to investigate the claim by some critics that Douglass had Muslims in his family lineage. Khaled A. Beydoun states in his article "Antebellum Islam" (2014) that "legal and practical consequences of wholesale enslavement, combined with ignorance about Islam during the Antebellum Era, contributed to the lack of scholarly examination into their lives" (7-8). It can be argued that Douglass, as a prominent slave narrator, was a son of enslaved African American Muslims. His full name, before he ran away to the North, was Frederick Augustus Bailey. His last

name has led some historians such as William McFeely and Michael Gomez, (*Black Crescent* 158 and “Muslims in Early America” 671), to speculate that “Bailey” is a transformation of “Bilali” which was a common enslaved Muslims’ name, such as Bilali Muhammad (Ben Ali) and Salih Bilali (Tom) in Georgia. Gomez, in his book *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*, quotes McFeely’s, a biographer of Douglass:

In the nineteenth century, on Sapelo Island (where Baileys still reside), there was a Fulfulde-speaking slave from Timbo, Futa Jallon, in the Guinea highlands, who could write Arabic and who was the father of twelve sons. His name was Belali Mahomet . . . “Belali” slides easily into English “Bailey,” a common African American surname along the Atlantic coast. The records of Talbot County list no white Baileys from which the slave Baileys might have taken their name, and an African origin, on the order of “Belali” is conceivable. (158)

In her first edition of *Servants of Allah* (1998), Sylviane Diouf disagrees with McFeely’s hypothesis by stating that “[t]he descendants of Bilali Mohammed . . . are now named Bailey, and there is no reason to think that they are the only family whose original name underwent this transformation. Douglass could not have been a descendent of this particular Bailey, because the Bailey name in his family preceded the arrival of Bilali Mohammed in the United States” (199). Douglass, in his second narrative *My Bondage and My Freedom*, alludes to North Africans through likening his his mother, Harriet Bailey’s features to those of Egyptian Pharaoh. Possible

explanation may include that he wanted to link himself to noble origin⁸¹ and give a strong impression of a civilized African heritage. The argument is not sufficiently developed regarding Douglass's Muslim lineage. There is inconclusive proof that indicates these to be an Islamic influence on his narrative. In fact, Douglass presents a Christian background in the narrative. However, this claim does not disprove the similarities in his narrative and those by enslaved African American Muslims, such as literacy and anti-slavery themes, which are discussed further in this chapter.

Blumenthal points out that Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) "features authenticating prefaces by white abolitionists Garrison and Wendell Phillips and stands even today as the "classic" and canonical slave narrative" (178). In the same vein, Charles Heglar states that Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) has been considered "as a touchstone for evaluating the thematic and narrative conventions of other works in the genre" (1). This results in two questions: what makes Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) a canonical slave narrative, and are the canonization standards - once defined - a valid basis for excluding all narratives by enslaved African American Muslims from the American literary canon. Analyzing, interpreting, and discussing these questions is a key purpose of this chapter. Indeed, this chapter is a contribution toward addressing the concerns of Charles J. Heglar: the emphasis on Douglass "has also led to a lack of appreciation for other slave narratives with themes and narrative strategies different from those of Douglass" (1).

⁸¹ Blumenthal discusses in her article the assumption of nobility and Douglass's description of his mother's physical features (184-185).

4.1 General Characteristics of and Criticisms on Antebellum Slave Narratives:

Literary critics and historians have hailed abolitionists in the 1830s for their important role in the rise of the antebellum slave narrative, broadly from 1830 to 1865. For instance, Philip Gould remarks that “[d]uring the 1830s and 1840s, changes in abolitionism drastically affected the thematic and formal features of the slave narrative” (“The Rise” 18). Similarly, Starling Bland in the introduction to *African American Slave Narratives: An Anthology* mentions the growth of political movements, such as the New England abolitionist movement, and its influence on slave narratives (6). The antebellum slave narrative is considered as the classic slave narrative. William Andrews describes slave narratives in the 1840s, such as those by Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Henry Bibb, as classic slave narratives (*To Tell* 61).⁸² Heglar defines a “designated self-authored, book-length, antebellum slave narrative as ‘classic’ slave narratives” (8). He clarifies his usage of the term classic in the endnotes:

I am using “classic” in this study to designate a period of production, 1830-1861; a set of characteristics, autonomous authorship of a book-length account by an ex-slave; and a thematic focus, the construction of a life in opposition to slavery based on personal experiences and available cultural discourses. (31)

The pre-antebellum slave narrative criticizes the transatlantic slave trade and presents themes of morality and justice more than the anti-slavery theme. Unlike the

⁸² See also Dabovic (“Displacement” 145).

pre-antebellum slave narrative, the antebellum slave narrative more directly criticizes the institution of slavery and calls for its abolition. This is most probably due to the anti-slavery societies and abolitionists whose interests were in using slave narrative to serve and defend their propagandas. As Gould states, “[t]he central abolitionist project of exposing the evils of the Southern plantation (and the false paternalistic myths supporting it) became the absolute priority of the antebellum slave narrative” (“The Rise” 19). Therefore, according to Gould, a significant difference between early slave narratives and antebellum slave narratives is that the latter became more focused (“The Rise” 13, 19) generally due to abolitionists’ directions.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, although the antebellum slave narrative was strongly influenced by the political perspective to abolish slavery, the religious perspective also continued to impact the narrative. Critics, such as Andrews, Foster and Gould, discuss religious influences on antebellum slave narratives. For example, Frances Foster provides an interpretation to understand antebellum slave narrative through a religious framework. She contends that the plot of the antebellum slave narrative has four phases. The first phase is the “loss of innocence” in which the narrator becomes aware of the meaning of being an enslaved person. The second phase is deciding to be free and considering ways of escape. The third phase is the actual escape from slavery. The last phase is being a free person (85). Foster argues that these phases of the slave narrative plot were influenced by Judeo-Christian myth:

The action moves from idyllic life of the Garden of Eden into the wilderness, the struggle for survival, the providential help, and the arrival into the Promised Land. In addition, the plot of the slave

narrative incorporates the parallel structure of birth into death and death into birth which also distinguishes the Judeo-Christian myth.

(84)

Foster's interpretation is reasonable since religious writings played a significant role in the lives of antebellum Americans (Gould, "The Rise" 20). From the first stage, "loss of innocence," of Foster's religious plot, it seems more applicable to the generations of enslaved people who were born in antebellum America. Because narrators who were born in slavery took time to discover and realize what slavery means. In contrast, this stage seems, arguably, applicable to the enslaved African-born narrators since they experienced freedom before their enslavements.

Olney lists and discusses, in his article "'I Was Born': Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature," the characteristics of slave narratives, which are more generally related to the antebellum slave narrative than earlier and later periods of slave narratives. To give general characteristics of the antebellum slave narrative, a narrative starts with one or more preface and a letter which are written by an abolitionist. In the actual narrative, enslaved or ex-enslaved narrators do not know a lot about their personal background, for example, their birthdates and their fathers. In contrast, early slave narratives, which mostly were written by or about enslaved African-born narrators, provide information about their families and hometowns before their enslavements.

Since anti-slavery is a central theme, the narrative is rich in details about an enslaved person's daily life in, for example, the plantations, their inhumane masters, physical and psychological abuse, torture and punishment, stories of other enslaved people's trials and tribulations and the double quests for freedom and literacy.

According to Heglar, “[s]uch physical and psychological quests constitute the vertical trope that is central to the antebellum narrative, but which is not as frequently found in earlier or later periods of production” of the slave narrative (9). Toward obtaining their quests, the ex-enslaved narrators develop intellectually, personally, spiritually and psychologically. Olney comments that the relationship between the three factors, narrator, sponsors, or abolitionists, and audience, “determines the narrative in theme, content, and form” (53). Olney elaborates that:

The theme is the reality of slavery and the necessity of abolishing it; the content is a series of events and descriptions that will make the reader see and feel the realities of slavery; and the form is a chronological, episodic narrative beginning with an assertion of existence and surrounded by various testimonial evidences for that assertion. (53)

Since abolishing slavery was the main goal, for the abolitionists as well as the enslaved and ex-enslaved narrators, usually the antebellum slave narrative did not just convey the narrator’s individual voice, but also voices of his/her enslaved fellows and community. Some critics, such as Olney and Andrews, claim that slave narratives appear to represent the narrators as examples of other enslaved people in the Southern plantations rather than to present the narrators as the subjects of their narratives. Therefore, according to Olney, “in one sense the narrative lives of the ex-slaves were as much possessed and used by the abolitionists as their actual lives had been by slaveholders” (51). Echoing Olney, Andrews states that editors control the slave narrative rather than the enslaved or ex-enslaved narrator:

Even though if an editor faithfully reproduced the facts of a black narrator's life, it was still the editor who decided what to make of these facts, how they should be emphasized, in what order they ought to be presented, and what was extraneous, or germane. It was the editor who controlled the manuscript. (*To Tell* 20)

For example, Douglass declares in his second narrative *My Bondage and My Freedom* that in his *Narrative* he did not freely write what he wants because of the abolitionists.

Carver Wendell Waters in the introduction to his book *Voice in The Slave Narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Solomon Northup*, discusses the features of the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century slave narratives. The features of the eighteenth-century slave narrative include: the narrative concerns with the individual, and the slave trade; discussion of slavery in Britain and Americas; depiction of events as an adventure or a "picaresque" that gives a religious understanding of the narrator's enslavement; and African-born narrators. Waters's main characteristics of the nineteenth-century slave narrative are that the narrative presents the slave community, where the narrator is a part of it, argues against slavery and focuses on American slavery. Also, the narrator searches for his/ her identity and criticizes the false Christianity of slaveholders (45-46).

The antebellum slave narratives usually end with an appendix or appendices which contain documents that serve as evidence for the narrative and authenticity of the narrator. Examples of the documents are marriage certificates, emancipation letters, religious and anti-slavery speeches and poems. Waters points out these other appendices have other functions too such as discussing various facts, and even serve

ideological purposes by “bringing the reader up to date regarding the protagonist” (38-39). Even though Gould states that the antebellum slave narrative is focused, he also points out that the slave narrative genre is intertextual (“The Rise” 13, 19). Similarly, Olney states that slave narrative is “an extremely mixed production” (49) and he adds that it is “all the mixed, heterogeneous, heterogeneric elements in slave narratives come to be so regular, so constant, so indispensable to the mode that they finally establish a set of conventions - a series of observances that become virtually *de riguer* - for slave narratives unto themselves” (50).

4.2 Canonizing Douglass: Douglass and Criticism

Prior to 1970, Frederick Douglass had been discussed by historians more than by literary scholars.⁸³ In the introduction to *Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass*, William Andrews states that the appearance of Douglass’s *Narrative* 1845 in Hennig Cohen’s *Landmarks of American Writing* (1968) is “perhaps the first sign that Douglass was on his way to becoming a canonical author in the history of American literature” (7). According to Joseph Csicsila, Douglass’s writings had been canonized in 1970 in the American literature anthologies, such as *American Poetry and Prose* and *The Literature of America* (174). Both anthologies include chapters of Douglass’s *Narrative* 1845. Csicsila adds:

Since then an additional thirty-three literary textbooks have incorporated Douglass’s writings, making Douglass one of the most anthologized African American authors in classroom collections of American literature published between 1967 and 1999. (174)

⁸³ See Joseph Csicsila (169), Andrews (*Critical Essays* 5-7) and Maurice Lee (7).

This statement indicates that the addition of Douglass in the American literary canon has helped in getting scholars' and critics' attention, and raising critical discussions on Douglass as a writer rather than a political or historical figure. Consequently, discussion of Douglass's writings, and the slave narrative in general, as historical documents evolved into their recognition and appreciation as literary works. According to Maurice Lee, the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, by the end of 1980s, Douglass "had become an author representative of much more – the slave narrative genre, African American literature in general, multicultural interpretation, and the politics of canon revision" (8). This section focuses on three reasons that contribute in making Douglass a canonical figure. Later, in the comparison section, Douglass is compared to enslaved African American Muslims, Abdr-Rahman, Omar, and Mahommah.

Reviewing studies on Douglass suggests that there are at least three major overlapping reasons that contributed in making Douglass a canonical figure in American literature. Generally, these reasons address Douglass's personal character, Douglass as a writer, and his political, cultural and social involvements. Foster's statement on Douglass summarizes these reasons: "By 1845 Douglass was a well-read man. He knew literary traditions. He was well acquainted with *The Liberator*^[84] and had read many slave narratives. He had a sense of history and politics, and when he wrote his narrative, he chose to follow what was by this time a recognized pattern for slave narratives" (56).

⁸⁴ *The Liberator* was an anti-slavery newspaper which was founded by the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison who also was the leader of American Anti-Slavery Society.

Regarding Douglass's character, he was a self-made man and was dedicated to this ideal. Douglass's famous lecture "Self-Made Men," which he delivered in 1891, conveys this. He educated himself and asserted his humanity even during his enslavement. For instance, when Mr. Auld forbids his wife to teach Douglass the ABC lessons, Douglass states that:

These [Mr. Auld's] words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. (Douglass 44)⁸⁵

This excerpt shows that when Douglass realizes the importance of education, he continues to educate himself even though it was a hard process without a tutor. For instance, he uses his young master's book, Webster's Spelling Book, learns from boys sometimes in exchange for bread, and in the shipyard, he watches shipbuilders marking timbers with letters. Douglass uses his literacy to escape from slavery by

⁸⁵ All quoted passages of Douglass's *Narrative* are from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Edited by Robert Stepto. Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2009.

writing “free paper.”⁸⁶ Another incident that reflects how Douglass was committed to the notion of being a self-made man is his fight with Mr. Edward Covey, a slave-breaker. Douglass writes, is commonly cited by scholars,⁸⁷ “You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man” (Douglass 75). In the North, Douglass continued pursuing being a self-made man and becoming an orator, abolitionist and writer. He founded his own abolitionist newspaper *The North Star*, the title which changed to *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* in 1851, when his perspectives differed from the white abolitionists’ views, the Garrisonians. In his *Narrative*, Douglass refuses to continually be an object of use of by the abolitionists. Instead, he attempts to present himself with agency and human subjectivity (Step to xxvi). This also supports his idea of self-consciousness and self-making.

This idea of the self-made man recalls one of the prominent American founding fathers and intellectuals, Benjamin Franklin. Douglass created a definition of national American identity as Franklin did. Jill Lepore refers to literacy as important achievement in the lives of both Franklin and Douglass and states Douglass’s tale is “one every bit as self-consciously fashioned and artfully as Franklin’s” (123). Also, she claims by using Webster’s spelling book as they learn to read and write, Douglass along other enslaved narrators were “explicitly linked . . . with the process of Americanization” (126). The relationship between the idea of self-made man and the argument of canonization is that Douglass had established his

⁸⁶ Douglass describes how he escaped from slavery in his third narrative *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881). He avoids mentioning this in his first narrative because he does not to want to give any information to slaveholders.

⁸⁷ Csicsila remarks that American anthologies in the multicultural-phase usually present Chapter 10 of the *Narrative*, which discusses the slave breaker, Covey, and Douglass’s fight with him (174).

own identity by challenging and trespassing the boundaries of the peculiar institution of slavery. Douglass's idea of the self-made man encouraged historians and literary scholars to acknowledge him a representative figure of his race. This reason overlaps with the following reason that relates to Douglass's political and social activities from the perspective of showing his Americanization and African Americans' rights as citizens.⁸⁸

Douglass's political, social and cultural activities are important factors in anthologizing him in American literature. Douglass's early interest in reading *Columbian Orator* (1797) conveys his intellectual interest in political matters and social spheres. Douglass's writings after his first narrative indicate his commitment to fight slavery and racism and involvement in cultural and social issues of his country. Time is also an important factor in receiving Douglass's *Narrative*. Douglass wrote this narrative before the Civil War when slavery and the debate surrounding its legitimate or otherwise was at its peak. In addition, Douglass presented himself as American; as Foster states his "extended literary efforts were limited to autobiographical works, but with these three publications Douglass established himself as an important *American* writer" (148; my emphasis). In a similar vein, Stepto states that Douglass's *Narrative* is "a great American book because it is a great American autobiography" (xxvi) and he borrows Benjamin Quarles's words that Douglass's *Narrative* is "an American book in theme, in tone, and in spirit" (Stepto ix). This is because Douglass presented himself as an American

⁸⁸ More information about the idea of self-making and Douglass is found in John Stauffer's essays "Frederick Douglass's Self-fashioning and the Making of a Representative American man" in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* (2007), and "Douglass's Self-Making and the Culture of Abolitionism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass* (2009).

citizen in his narratives rather than an enslaved or inferior person. Even though the title of his first narrative emphasizes that he was “an American slave,”⁸⁹ in the appendix, he criticizes the Southern hypocritical Christian slaveholders compared to the true Christianity that their slaves had. By this comparison Douglass reflects the superiority of enslaved people and presents as well how human they are. Douglass’s later autobiographies convey more messages and actions regarding his American identity. Similarly, Lepore remarks that Douglass’s literacy “was a means not only of insisting upon his humanity and securing his freedom, but also of establishing his Americanness” (126).⁹⁰

This reason reflects Douglass’s insistence not only on emphasizing his American citizenship and rights, but also those of his enslaved fellows and more broadly African Americans. According to Starling, Douglass’s *Narrative* is “the veritable ambassador before the world of the soul of the American Negro imprisoned as a slave” (278). From the sociopolitical perspective of canonization, Douglass’s roles as an abolitionist, orator and writer support his recognition as a canonical figure rather than merely being an ex-enslaved narrator. For instance, Douglass wrote three autobiographical works that reflect a clear anti-slavery attitude and sentiment. He also participated in the Civil War and gave lectures and speeches, such as “What to a slave is the 4th of July?” Stephen Butterfield sets out clearly the relationship between Douglass’s political involvement and the study of slave narrative:

⁸⁹ Possibly, Garrison influenced the title of Douglass’s *Narrative* since critics argue that Garrison controlled Douglass’s *Narrative* and thus put the authentication of the narrative into question. See Blumenthal (179-181, 186), Robert Stepto’s introduction to Douglass’s *Narratives*, Gould (“The Rise” 24) and Foster (68).

⁹⁰ Similarly, Stepto claims that the idea of Douglass’s self-made man is an assertion of his American citizenship (“Introduction” x).

One of the most important critical lessons of the slave narratives is that the literary achievement proceeds *through* and *from* the political involvement of the writer. Douglass is great as a literary figure mainly *because* of the demands made on him in his political life; the one is not incidental to the other. It is impossible to appreciate his work as art without relating it constantly to his politics; there can be no such thing as a “purely aesthetic” standard of evaluating slave narrative literature. (88)

The first and second reasons for canonizing Douglass in American literature, his self-consciousness and involvement in both the political and cultural spheres, convey how important sociopolitical contexts are for anthologizing his work in American literature.

The third reason concerns the canonization of Douglass from a literary perspective; Douglass as a writer. Unlike many slave narrators, Douglass continued to publish other literary works after his *Narrative*. According to Foster, by tracing the history of Douglass’s publications, “the relationship between slave narratives and autobiography becomes apparent” and helps in construing African American literary traditions (149). Besides his autobiographies, Douglass wrote speeches and a novella, “The Heroic Slave” (1853). Critics, such as Butterfield, Foster and Lee, describe Douglass as a great American writer. Butterfield in *Black Autobiography in America* devotes a chapter to Douglass’s literary narratives and literary styles. He states that Douglass “is superior, as a writer, to Solomon Bayley, Moses Grandy, Austin Steward, and dozens of other slave narrators, precisely because he did so much more than report what it was like to pick cotton and how he eluded the perils of escape”

(80). Echoing Butterfield, James Olney, in his discussion on the characteristics of the slave narrative, praises Douglass's *Narrative* for being "quite closely the greatest" and the exemplar of all slave narratives (51).

Regarding the aesthetic values of his *Narrative*, Douglass plays with names of his masters, such as Mr. Severe and Mr. Freeland, as a reflection on his life as an enslaved person. He writes that "Mr. Severe was rightly named: he was a cruel man" (23). In case of Mr. Freeland, Douglass says: "At the close of the year 1834, Mr. Freeland again hired me of my master, for the year 1835. But, by this time, I began to want to live *upon free land* as well as *with Freeland*; and I was no longer content, therefore, to live with him or any other slaveholder" (86). These examples explain that Douglass was not merely recounting this experience in slavery, but indeed he was aware of the act of writing. Additional support for this is found when Douglass links his suffering in slavery with the moment of writing the *Narrative*, "My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes" (39). Another literary value is that Douglass draws an alternative climax of the slave narrative plot which is "not his physical escape, as would be expected, but rather a moment of psychological self-liberation" when he fought Covey (Couser 123). *Columbian Orator* influenced Douglass in writing his narrative with "variety in tone and style" (Meer 72).

Arguably, the publication and reception of Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) also has advanced its inclusion in the American literary canon. It "was an antebellum best-seller," which was, according to William Andrews, "much more widely read than Thoreau's *Walden*, for instance, or the first edition of Whiteman's *Leaves of Grass*" (*Critical Essays* 2). 5,000 copies of Douglass's *Narrative* were sold "in the

first four months of publication. Between 1845 and 1847, the *Narrative* sold 11,000 copies; in Great Britain, nine editions were printed in these two years. And by 1860, 30,000 copies had sold” (Davis and Gates xvi).⁹¹ Lee remarks that the *Narrative* had made Douglass famous (1, 8). To conclude, the reception of Douglass’s *Narrative* contributed in its canonization by receiving more attention and critical discussions than his other narratives.

Generally, these three reasons for canonizing Douglass are related social, historical and literary perspectives, which support the approaches of multiethnic literary canonization. Lee points out a reason for including Douglass in anthologies of American literature after the mid-twentieth century “an increasingly professionalized literary establishment created an exclusionary canon that tended to privilege formal unity over sociopolitical content” (6). Canonizing and presenting Douglass’s *Narrative* as the best slave narrative brings to mind Jan Gorak’s theoretical claim “[w]hen modern critics describe a work as a ‘yardstick’ for future achievement or as a ‘milestone’ for a particular genre, they may unconsciously act in the spirit of the earliest Greek speakers, who gradually pushed *canon* from mensuration to evaluation” (10). Scholars and critics have restricted the definitions of slave narrative through the characteristics of Douglass’s *Narrative*. As Heglar claims traditions and “conventions of antebellum slave narrative, those employed by Frederick Douglass, have become the generic standards by which other narratives are judged” (8).

⁹¹ See also Foster (22, 147), William Andrews (*Critical Essays* 2) and Philip Gould (“The Rise” 24).

Nicole Aljoe, in the introduction to *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas*, argues for widening the definition and considering other characteristics of slave narratives. She criticizes scholars who limit the slave narrative genre to separately published and self-authored slave narratives. She claims even though their approach helps in outlining the study of the slave narrative's "contours of a coherent tradition," the approach "leave[s] out large numbers of texts" (3). Therefore, this approach restricts the study of slave narrative and omits its "fundamental diversity" as a genre. Aljoe remarks the benefit of widening the definition of the slave narrative is "to accommodate the wide variety of styles, forms, and contexts in which the testimonies of slaves have historically appeared" (4). In her co-edited book, Omar ibn Said's *Life* is discussed by Basima Kamel Shaheen, along with other narratives by non-Muslim African Americans. This approach enables the characteristics of narratives by enslaved African American Muslims to be better considered and supports their inclusion in American literature.

4.3 Comparison of Douglass's *Narrative* to Narratives by Abdr-Rahman, Omar and Mahommah

Antebellum slave narratives were mostly written by enslaved or formerly enslaved narrators who were born in the United States. Unlike most non-Muslim African American narrators who were born in American slavery, the discussed enslaved African American Muslims were all African-born. The discussion will now move on to compare Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) with three nineteenth-century narratives by enslaved African American Muslims. The respective narratives are Abdr-Rahman's *Abduhl Rahahman, The Unfortunate Moorish Prince* (1828), Omar's *The Life of Omar Ibn Said, Written by Himself* (1831) and Mahommah's *An Interesting Biography of Mahommah Baquaqua* (1854). Turkistani believes that

narratives by enslaved Muslims are “ill-composed” and it is unfair to compare them to Douglass’s *Narrative* and other typical slave narratives:

It would be unfair to compare the often fragmentary and ill-composed narratives before us here to the great narratives and dwell on the former’s unworthiness. These clearly modest narratives and writings do, however, provoke us to think about a different sort of slave and a different sort of slave experience. These Muslim slaves were fortunate to have better communication and understanding with their masters than was typical. (279-280)

Even though Turkistani argues in his dissertation that editors misunderstood and misconceived enslaved African American Muslims because of their former lack of cultural background on these narrators, he himself underestimates the writings by these narrators. Based on my judgment narratives by enslaved African Muslims are not as Turkistani reductively calls them simply “ill-composed.” In fact, these narratives display literary characteristics that enrich the slave narrative genre. This leads to the question: should a slave narrative have the same characteristics that Douglass’s *Narrative* has or should other characteristics beyond Douglass’s *Narrative* be considered in the study of slave narrative? The comparison here is important to discuss the typical characteristics and of these narratives in order to look to the issue of canonization. Besides, the comparison provides different aspects that widen the understanding of the antebellum slave narrative.

4.3.1 Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim

Abduhl Rahahman, The Unfortunate Moorish Prince has three main sections: a letter and a short note, “Abduhl Rahahman’s History” and “His Interview with Dr. Cox.” The narrative as it appears in Austin’s *Sourcebook* is five pages long. Abdr-Rahman wrote his autobiography in 1828 at a request of the American Colonization Society (ACS): “At our request, Prince [Abdr-Rahman] has written a concise history of himself, and we have penned a translation of it from his own lips. The only liberty we have taken, is to correct those grammatical inaccuracies, which resulted from his imperfect knowledge of our language” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 146). The letter conveys Abdr-Rahman’s wish to free his descendants after the help of Natchez people in freeing his wife. Also, Cyrus Griffin saw Abdr-Rahman as a good tool for missionary purposes in Africa. Ralph Gurley’s note praises Abdr-Rahman for his intelligence, and mentions his visits to the Northern states, his father’s kindness and hospitality to Dr. Cox, and the ACS’s request to write the autobiography. Together, the letter and the note give background on Abdr-Rahman and the authenticity of his narrative. In contrast, Garrison’s preface and Wendell Philips’s letter politicize Douglass’s *Narrative* by acknowledging Douglass, criticizing slavery and relating the narrative to the economic and socio-political issues between the South and the North.

The two sections, “Abduhl Rahahman’s History” and “His Interview with Dr. Cox,” are the body of the narrative. The first sentence of Abdr-Rahman’s autobiography gives the reader a sense that it is going to unfold as a typical slave narrative, “I was born.” According to Waters that “[t]his formulistic tag exists because the white audience and the Abolitionist [sic] sponsors demanded and

expected certain conventions and because the slave narrator had a necessity to prove his existence before proceeding to the text of his narrative” (44). However, the rest of the narrative mostly provides information that is different from other typical slave narratives. Immediately after mentioning his birthplace, he gives background information about his father Ibrahim Sori, who was a “king in Teembo, in Foota Jallon” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 146). He goes on to provide brief information about how he was a horseman and then a distinguished and experienced military officer in his early twenties, “I was made a Captain when I was twenty-One—after they put me to that, and found that I had a very good head, at twenty-four they made me Colonel” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 146).

These pieces of information, his royal birth and skills, suggest that the theme of noble savage continues, which appears in the biography of Ayyub, who preceded Abdr-Rahman by nearly a century before, into the nineteenth century. According to Foster, “[b]efore the nineteenth century, however, the majority of the narrators were Africans (and often alleged to be of royal birth). Their foreign background could be exploited to satisfy the curiosity and romanticism of their readers” (92-93). From another point of view, this could be another strategy that enslaved Muslims, and their editors, used to indicate their own humanity and arouse the sympathy of the white people. The theme of the noble savage continues prominently in Abdr-Rahman’s narrative in the section devoted to Dr. Cox’s story, which will be discussed later.

Abdr-Rahman writes about his captivation story, how he was enslaved and moved to the New World. He narrates more details of how he was taken captive in Africa compared to the information he provides about how he reached the New World. He avoids details about the harshness of the Middle Passage. Regarding his

voyage from Africa to America, Abdr-Rahman states that his captors “sold . . . [him] directly, with fifty others, to an English ship. They took . . . [him] to the Island of Dominica. After that they took . . . [him] to Natchez” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 147). Austin summarizes Alford’s description of Abdr-Rahman’s harsh voyage to the New World where he lived most of his life:

For half a year he was almost continually ship-bound. He rode the river Gambia for a week; suffered the 3000-mile, six-week sail across the Atlantic to Dominica in the West Indies; and then had to undergo another 2200 miles and six more weeks’ passage across the Caribbean to the Mississippi. . . . There he remained ship-bound for another week before landing in Spanish New Orleans . . . After a month’s stay there, he was finally carried 300 miles upriver, and in another thirty days he had arrived at his home away from home, Natchez. (*Sourcebook* 126)

Abdr-Rahman never forgot this horrible experience. Alford remarks that Abdr-Rahman narrated to Thomas Gallaudet, who wrote a biography of Abdr-Rahman, his voyage when he was sixty-six years old (29). The question that arises here is why Abdr-Rahman did not mention that in *Abduhl Rahahman, The Unfortunate Moorish Prince* which could serve as rich information about the harshness of the Middle Passage and voyages he passed through as an enslaved captive. According to Alford, “no full account of these weeks was ever published” (29). Alford assumes two reasons for the absence of this information, which are attributed to biographers. Regarding Abdr-Rahman’s autobiography, the reasons for this similar omission are attributed to the ACS.

Alford's first reason is that the biographer did not want to mention the accounts of the Middle Passage and slave ships which people in 1820s were familiar with. The other reason is that the biographers did not want to raise problems with slaveholders by mentioning Abdr-Rahman's experience as Gallaudet states that "[t]he nature of this traffic has been so often before you, that it would be useless at the present moment to describe its horrors" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 172). Turkistani suggests another two reasons. Firstly, the editors and biographers were interested in presenting other parts of Abdr-Rahman's story rather than presenting the Middle Passage or his struggle. Secondly, Abdr-Rahman was hesitant to express these details (78). Alford and Turkistani's reasons are all possible. If Abdr-Rahman's original Arabic autobiography were available, it likely could tell us, by comparing the original and its English translation, about whether suppressing information of the voyage from Africa to America was made by the translators and editors or by Abdr-Rahman, himself.

Another possible reason for Abdr-Rahman not expressing his suffering at any particular length is that after presenting himself in a high social class, he did not want to present himself as a victim with little dignity, probably from a religious or socio-cultural perspective. For instance, if Abdr-Rahman had highlighted this information, the narrative would present him as a "professional soldier, an officer and a strategist" (Alford 64) who did not surrender to his enemy until the last moment, but later became a feeble man and who was a captive all the time at the voyage. However, by omitting it, he preserved his dignity. A further probable reason is that Abdr-Rahman did not want to give a lot of details that might shift the narrative's focus, which purposes to free his children and enabled their return to Africa. Mentioning his

sufferings of forty years beforehand may not have helped him in achieving his goals at the time of his writing.

Abdr-Rahman's autobiography also does not give details of his life as an enslaved person or explain his struggles in American slavery unlike the non-Muslim antebellum slave narrative. Abdr-Rahman briefly says that "I have lived with Colonel F. [Thomas Foster] 40 years. Thirty years I laboured hard. The last ten years I have been indulged a good deal" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 147). He worked at Foster's cotton and tobacco plantations and until 1818, the year when Douglass was born, he became an overseer. Alford highlights information regarding Foster's treatment toward Abdr-Rahman. So, Abdr-Rahman could narrate about Foster's bad treatment of him as an enslaved person, for instance when he disbelieved Abdr-Rahman's royal blood, named him Prince, humiliated him by cutting his plaits, which are signs of "great beauty" in Futa Jallon as Alford remarks (44), and whipped him when he refused to go and work in the field.

In fact, the word "indulged" for an enslaved person conveys strongly an opposite position from what typical slave narratives aim to present. These narratives present the misery of the institution of slavery. Presumably, Abdr-Rahman did not want to create problems with his former master which consequently might harm his descendants, for instance by refusing to free them or to sell them to different slaveholders. This reason is more rational when we consider sentences that follow Abdr-Rahman's statement for being Foster's enslaved person. Abdr-Rahman immediately expresses his desire to free his children and grandchildren and return to Africa:

I have left five children behind, and eight grand children [sic]. I feel sad, to think of leaving my children behind me. I desire to go back to my own country again; but when I think of my children, it hurts my feelings. If I go to my own country, I cannot feel happy, if my children are left. I hope, by God's assistance, to recover them. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 147)

After asking for God's assistance for releasing his descendants, Abdr-Rahman ends this section with the hope of meeting good friends like the ones he met in Washington, who could help him in recovering his children.

The last section of the autobiography is "His Interview with Dr. Cox." In 1781, John Coates Cox, an Irish surgeon of a ship, got lost in Africa when he went hunting with his friends and got separated from them. Abdr-Rahman writes that his countrymen ran to and told his father when they saw the stranger Dr. Cox nearly dead. Ibrahim Sori ordered them to bring Dr. Cox to him and advised Dr. Cox to stay at Futa Jallon until he recovered his health. Ibrahim provided Cox with a nurse and hospitality. After six months, Dr. Cox told Ibrahim that he wanted to return to his country. Abdr-Rahman's father provided Dr. Cox with gold for his passage and fifteen guards to protect and bring him back if he did not find the ship. Dr. Cox found the same ship and traveled to his home. After sixteen years of enslavement, Abdr-Rahman met Dr. Cox at Natchez, where the former was selling potatoes. They recognized each other. Dr. Cox talked with the Governor of Natchez, Robert Williams how he was treated kindly by Abdr-Rahman's father who saved his life. Dr. Cox was willing to purchase Abdr-Rahman at any amount of money, but Foster

refused. Abdr-Rahman ends this section by stating that: “After Dr. Cox died, his son offered a great price for me” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 148).

The story of Dr. Cox is important in the narrative because it reflects the theme of the noble savage and simultaneously reverses Western stereotypes regarding Africans as barbarians and uncivilized. The story represents Africans as civilized in treating the white stranger. Turkistani comments that Abdr-Rahman gained his freedom after he had been humiliated as an enslaved person for forty years, whereas Dr. Cox was treated in such a different way in Africa, and when he desired to go back home, his desire was fulfilled (80). Even though Abdr-Rahman most probably was free during the time of writing his autobiography, his motives for writing were to reverse the stereotypes and support the manumission of his children so they could return to Africa with him.

Abdr-Rahman’s autobiography does not have an appendix or any supporting testimonies. His narrative does not convey everything of his life. For instance, Abdr-Rahman did not write about his education, attempt to escape from Foster, relationship with the newspaper editor Andrew Marschalk, letter to Africa, meeting with President John Quincy Adams, and his emancipation. Did Abdr-Rahman intend to be brief in presenting information that only serves his goal? (which could be considered as one of the strategies to achieve his main goal). Or was he not capable of writing his autobiography? Turkistani remarks that Abdr-Rahman’s “brief autobiography, however, could have been intended to support his cause and deliberately not offend any person who could help him attain freedom. His selectivity may thus show that he was conscious of his readers and he decided to what they wanted to hear” (79). Alternatively, did his Arabic autobiography have more details

and sections than its translation? Did the ACS members, such as Ralph R. Gurley, mistranslate or delete parts from the original narrative? His autobiography raises a lot of questions about editors and colonizationists' influences. Again, the absence of his Arabic original obscures the fundamental reason for why Abdr-Rahman's autobiography is short.

Abdr-Rahman's autobiography ends when he started to become a celebrity due to recent events in his life that contribute to his manumission. His story with Dr. Cox inspired people to know more about him, such as Marschalk and Griffin who invited Abdr-Rahman to their offices. Around 1820 and 1821, Marschalk realized that Abdr-Rahman knew Arabic, and the latter expressed his desire to write a letter to Africa. Marschalk was willing to help Abdr-Rahman, but he only wrote the letter six years later.

Alford assumes that Foster's selling of Abdr-Rahman's daughter Susy led Abdr-Rahman to write the letter because he was afraid of the idea of getting separated from his offspring (97). Alford's assumption suggests that Abdr-Rahman wanted to change his situation when the matter touched one of his family members. He managed to deal with his life as an enslaved person, but he did not bear the idea of getting separated from his family. Therefore, Abdr-Rahman's motivation for freedom could have possibly been to secure his family. Turkistani claims that Abdr-Rahman's frustration from his master's selfishness led him to make the decision to write the letter (94). Turkistani's statement suggests that Abdr-Rahman desired to take a step forward to his freedom. The theme of seeking freedom in his autobiography is not for himself, because he was already free, but for his descendants.

A significant point here is that in order to gain his freedom and raise money to manumit his children, Abdr-Rahman used his literacy, allowed Americans to misrepresent him as a Moroccan royal person and feigned his conversion to Christianity. These three strategies helped him to get the interests of different categories of people, for instance, political leaders, editors, merchants, and African-American abolitionists and intellectuals, such as David Walker and John Russwurm, the editor of the first African American newspaper. In 1828, Abdr-Rahman likely was “the best-known Afro-American in the country” (Austin, *Sourcebook* 123). Turkistani comments that Abdr-Rahman “succeeded because he changed his techniques: instead of dealing with complete honesty to serve others’ interests, he began to look out for his own interest in freeing himself” (94).

Even though the quest for literacy as a theme in Abdr-Rahman’s narrative is absent due to the fact that he was educated before his enslavement, his literacy, similarly as Douglass’s, was important in the “pathway from slavery to freedom” (Douglass 44). Through their written words, they were able to present their own humanity. Abdr-Rahman used his literacy to impress white people to raise money to release his children. According to Dabovic “[b]y asking Marschalk for help to write a letter to Africa, considering the history of black literacy in the south, he declares that he is not a “Negro” (“Displacement” 47). However, according to Jill Lepore, Abdr-Rahman, unlike Douglass, used his literacy “very differently.” He was not interested in writing in American letters:

Because he could never use his Arabic to forge a pass, slaveowners perceived it as less dangerous. And the “Unfortunate Moorish Prince” had no interest in entering the republic of (American) letters or even

remaining in the United States. He was interested instead in maintaining his own, quite foreign, language, religion, and alphabet. Abd al-Rahman presented specimens of his writing to the American public not to persuade them of his Americanness and to insist on a place for himself in their world but to argue for his differentness, embodied in the very letters with which he wrote. (126)

Lepore mostly examines Abdr-Rahman's literacy from the perspective of presenting a national identity. Similarly, Turkistani remarks that Abdr-Rahman's "refusal to be assimilated or be involved in American life, though he was married to an American-born slave, was a clear sign of his strong belief in his African identity" (91). It is important to take into considering the difference between a person who was born and lived free until his twenties and the one who was born in slavery, who mostly searches for his/her identity. To be clear, this present study focuses on the narratives that either were written in the United States or whose narrators experienced their enslavement in the United States. Thus, this approach considers Abdr-Rahman's autobiography and writings as a part of the ethnic diversity of enslaved narrators in the United States rather than presenting them as uniform narrators. What Lepore believes Abdr-Rahman's "language, religion, and alphabet" make him different from Douglass, indeed these elements reflect an example of identities among enslaved peoples in the antebellum America. Therefore, Abdr-Rahman along with his writings are examples of multiculturalism in the United States.

Even though, as Lepore states, Abdr-Rahman's Arabic writing had not enabled him to write a pass as Douglass did and thus his literacy was perceived by slaveholders as "less dangerous," his letters to his children caused a problem to the

Southern slaveholders. In one of his letters, Abdr-Rahman writes “shall . . . come on next fall to Natchez with what I get, to see my old master and purchase some of my sons” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 161). Foster became frustrated because Abdr-Rahman’s letter raised an anti-slavery message and also his condition to free Abdr-Rahman was violated. “Once ar-Rahman [Abdr-Rahman] reached the north, Arabic turned into a dangerous political weapon for abolitionists and supporters of colonization. This abrupt move reminded Southerners that literate slaves were threats to the slave apparatus and abolitionist agitators seemed determined to use literacy as a major weapon against slavery” (Dabovic, “Displacement” 61). Here also is another contradiction to Lepore’s claim; Abdr-Rahman used his literacy to raise money to free his children.

Besides his literacy, Abdr-Rahman used other techniques that collaborated in the process of emancipating himself and his family. In the same year of being released from the field work, Abdr-Rahman attended church services and showed interest in Christianity (Alford 80). In addition, he asked for the Holy Bible in Arabic. This, as Alford remarks, can be considered as a step in order to build a “closer relationship” with his master in the hope of freeing him and his descendants. Presumably, Foster sympathized with Abdr-Rahman after he showed an interest in Christianity and thereby made Abdr-Rahman an overseer. According to Turkistani, Abdr-Rahman’s “interest in Christianity became an important factor in his gaining freedom” (94). Later on his sympathizers and colonizationists tried to free his children. In addition, when Abdr-Rahman was asked to write the Lord’s Prayer in Arabic, he did not tell them that what he had written to them was indeed the first chapter of the Holy Quran. The colonizationists in particular, saw Abdr-Rahman as a very good tool to achieve their goal to transfer freed Africans to Liberia and spread

Christianity in Africa to “enlighten the Africans in their native country” as Gallaudet emphasizes (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 155). For instance, Gallaudet states in a letter to Abdr-Rahman: “I beg you to read the Arabic Bible carefully . . . I beg you at the same time to pray Almighty God, that he would guide you by his wisdom into the knowledge of the true religion” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 156). Abdr-Rahman replies to Gallaudet: “After I took this book [the Holy Bible] home, I hope I shall get many to become Christians. If I find things at home in the same way I left, I think they will become Christians. When I left my country almost all the young people followed Christians”. His reply is as Austin notes “[a]n out-and-out lie—but who knew differently?” (*Sourcebook* 251). I believe that Abdr-Rahman’s reply was to satisfy Gallaudet and gain friends in order to manumit his children, in particular he writes a note by the end of this letter that he has children and grandchildren, who he wanted to free them and leave together to Africa. Abdr-Rahman practiced his old faith when he landed at Liberia and did not fulfill his missionary promises.

Another technique that Abdr-Rahman arguably exploited is the American misrepresentation of him as an Arab, a Moorish prince. This misconception led the political leaders, such as Henry Clay, Secretary of State, and John Quincy Adams to think of manumitting and returning Abdr-Rahman to Africa from a diplomatic perspective. Subsequently, this could build a good relationship with Morocco and to free any possible future enslaved Americans in Morocco. First, Abdr-Rahman resisted when his hair was cut by his master, however, later he accepted the idea of being Moorish and used it as a strategy even though he was not a Moor. He used this misrepresentation to claim that, according to Griffin in the first biography about Abdr-Rahman, there is “not a drop of negro blood runs in his vein. He [Abdr-Rahman] places the negro in a scale of being infinitely below the Moor” (qtd. in

Austin, *Sourcebook* 135). Later on, Abdr-Rahman joined African Americans, whose agendas were opposed to the ACS, in the North and accepted their invitations. As Dabovic states, Abdr-Rahman's story "is not simply about 'freedom.' It is about moving beyond the apparent limitations inscribed by white racial thought and constructing a new sense of self and destiny" ("Displacement" 46).

Abdr-Rahman's appearance as a stranger, and his writings and visits in the Northern states caused a problem between the South and the North during the election period. Abolitionists, who were supporters of Adams, used Abdr-Rahman to defend their argument against Andrew Jackson, who was a slaveholder. Marschalk, who first helped Abdr-Rahman in obtaining his freedom and sending his letter, turned against him because the former was a supporter of Andrew Jackson. Marschalk states that the use of Abdr-Rahman by Adams and his party to advocate his re-election would lead enslaved people to revolt in the South. Similarly, Jackson's supporter, P. K Wagner criticizes Adams for allowing Abdr-Rahman to visit the North by stating:

But what did Mr. Adams do? Did he comply with his contract and send the negro to Africa? No--what then? He gave the negro a passport and sent him in triumph through the free states, where he is now travelling, and has been since last May, arousing wherever he goes the prejudices of the people against slavery and against the slave holders of the South, thereby making a political diversion in favor of Mr. Adams, and preparing the way for the ulterior object--emancipation on a large scale. A negro who can read and write the Arabic language with facility, thirty years in a slavery among the

“barbarians of Mississippi,” himself a king, liberated by John Q. Adams--What an irresistible appeal is this to the sympathies and prejudices of the people of the free states! What a powerful argument this, in favor of re-electing that *humane man* J. Q. Adams to the presidency, and excluding the slave holder Andrew Jackson! (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 214-215)

Abdr-Rahman's travels in the North expose different political and social views toward slavery, especially during the time of the election. In addition, his case reflected different attitudes toward race in early America. Abdr-Rahman was described as an Arab and as a “Negro,” as a Muslim and as a Christian, as a stranger and as a citizen. Wagner claimed that Abdr-Rahman was used as a tool and instrument by Adams and Clay to achieve their objectives. Alternatively, Abdr-Rahman seemed to use the political atmosphere to serve his case; Austin claims that Abdr-Rahman “did not allow himself to be used” (*Transatlantic* 73). Similarly, Alford states that Abdr-Rahman showed his independence from the ACS, “[h]e was ready to help and be helped by the society, but he did not consider himself a ribbon on the tail of its kite” (139). Turkistani believes that Abdr-Rahman's “strength lies in his strong identity, perseverance, faith, character, and integrity” (75). Abdr-Rahman had been in a high position, a scholar and a colonel, in his homeland, which gives a possible explanation of his self-dignity in the United States.

To sum up the comparison between Abdr-Rahman and Douglass, Douglass's *Narrative* is preserved and documented as “written by himself,” whereas Abdr-Rahman's narrative is available only in translation. It is unknown whether Abdr-Rahman had looked, commented on or agreed with his translated autobiography or

not. Abdr-Rahman's autobiography is simple, its language straightforward and brief in contrast to as Douglass's book-length narrative. Abdr-Rahman's narrative plot is simple and does not convey some events and experience that could enrich the narrative. Despite this fact, Abdr-Rahman "knew how to make his points" (Austin *Transatlantic* 82) and got what he wanted; freeing himself, his wife, and some of his children, returning to Africa and his maintaining his faith. The main theme of the autobiography is to release his children and grandchildren, and leave to Africa. Therefore, Abdr-Rahman's family is one of the focal points that make him different from Douglass. Douglass did not have children, whose enslavement would have affected the direction of his narrative. Abdr-Rahman was similar to Harriet Jacobs, who also wanted to ensure her children's freedom. Would Douglass behave similarly if he had enslaved children? Regarding the literary values, Abdr-Rahman's autobiography does not have artistic values as Douglass's who used metaphors and literary styles. It is possible that Abdr-Rahman may have used some literary styles in his Arabic autobiography, but the translated version, as a piece of colonizationists' propaganda, did not reflect them. Abdr-Rahman's autobiography raises questions for further study concerning the translated slave narrative.

4.3.2 Omar Ibn Said

Omar ibn Said's *The Life of Omar Ibn Said, Written by Himself* (1831) was translated into English during Omar's lifetime two times, in 1848 by Alexander Cotheal and in 1862 by Issac Bird. However, Omar's *Life* was not published in the English translation until 1925, which was Bird's translation revised by F. M. Moussa. In the same year, the original autobiography was lost, but it was rediscovered in 1995. Ala A. Alryyes provides a translation of Omar's *Life* in Marc

Shell and Werner Sollors (eds.), *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations* (2000) along with a copy of the original manuscript. In 2011, Alryyes presents a translation in *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said* which also contains a copy of the Arabic autobiography of Omar. The 1925 translation is not accurate when it is compared to the original. Omar is presented as a Christian in this translation. Through the copy that appears in Alryyes's book, the autobiography consists of 15 pages. From page 1 to page 4, Omar copied Chapter 67, *Surat Almulk* from the Holy Quran. Page 5 is Omar's apology to Sheikh Hunter for not remembering the Arabic language well. Pages 6 to 15 are his slave narrative.⁹²

The autobiography consists of three introductions which are Chapter 67; the apology; and the formula of praising Allah before narrating his background information. The question that occurs here is whether there is any reason behind Omar's selection of, specifically, the Quranic Chapter 67 at the beginning of his autobiography. Looking at this Quranic Chapter, it has many messages that Omar may be trying to convey to the western community about his enslavement. John Hunwick claims although Omar spent a long time in slavery (about twenty-four years), the Quranic verses that he used in his manuscripts were not the only ones that he memorized, and he did not select them randomly (63). Hunwick argues that there was a conscious message behind the verses that Omar chose and included in his manuscripts (68). For example, the first two verses of Chapter 67 are "Blessed be He in whose hand is the *mulk* [dominion] and who has power over all things. He created death and life that He might put you to proof and find out which of you had the best

⁹² See the Appendix.

work” (Ibn Said 51). Presumably, Omar wanted to tell the American people that everyone is a servant of God. The Quranic Chapter 67 also reflects scenes of punishment and hell. Omar may be trying to warn slaveholders to fear God and to rethink their treatment of the enslaved people before God sends them punishment on Earth before the Day of Judgment.⁹³

Another possibility is that Omar selected this Quranic Chapter at random. Sylviane Diouf claims that autobiography was a “totally new writing exercise” for African Muslims in America (*Servants* 203). Dwight Reynolds, too, states that “it is unclear, from the evidence available, whether any of these men had read an Arabic autobiography” (58), but he indicates that Omar’s *Life* is influenced by Arabic and Islamic literary genres. If we take the assumption that Omar had never read an autobiography in his life and he did not know about this genre, that would lead to the claim that Omar selected Chapter 67 as an introduction to his autobiography. This is because it is conventional in the Islamic world to recite from the Holy Quran before starting the main topic of a ceremony, a lecture, or an oratory. It is arguable that Omar thought the words of Allah would be a better beginning to his autobiography which also could be regarded as an oratory.

After the Quranic Chapter, Omar states his apology to Sheikh Hunter and others, “O my brothers,” for not being able to write Arabic well. Olney remarks that “[v]arious narrators of documents ‘written by himself’ apologize for their lack of grace or style or writing ability, and again various narrators say that theirs are simple, factual, realistic presentations” (63). For instance, Garrison, in the preface to

⁹³ See also Osman and Forbes’s comments on the Quranic Chapter 67 (338). Similarly, Timothy Marr in his article, “‘Out of This World’: Islamic Irruptions in the Literary Americas” makes the same point (538).

Douglass's *Narrative*, states that Douglass in his first speech apologized "for his ignorance, and [reminded] the audience that slavery was a poor school for the human intellect and heart" (3). Similarly, Alryyes states regarding Omar's apology that it "deceptively echoes the rhetorical claim that the author is not up to the task, a de rigueur flourish that accompanies many a literary preface" (6). Therefore, Omar presumably wanted to present himself in a humble way.

Omar writes "O Sheikh Hunter . . . I cannot write my life" (Ibn Said 59), so Omar's motivation for writing this autobiography is as a response to Sheikh Hunter's request. The author's motivation for writing appears clearly before he starts talking about himself, which reflects Omar's awareness in organizing his autobiography. Similar to Abdr-Rahman, the ACS has a role in writing Omar's narrative. In fact, Ralph Gurley, the secretary of ACS had met Omar as well as Abdr-Rahman. The connection between the ACS and Omar raises questions concerning his religious identity and his presented view in the narrative. Then, Omar praises Allah for His bounty. Arguably, Omar's apology works as a preface to the narrative which refers to a respected American person who knows Omar. Ghada Osman and Camille Forbes claim the use of Arabic language itself authenticates the autobiography (331).

After the apology, Omar repeats the formula, "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful." Then, he praises Allah and says "[t]hanks be to Him who created the creation for His worship, So He may judge their deeds and words" (Ibn Said 61). Arguably, this statement serves two functions: firstly, as a normal way an Arabic autobiography would start its introduction with praising Allah. Secondly, it may convey a message to his master and slaveholders in general. He may want to remind them of the fact of their existence in this world and to rethink that everybody

is equal and nobody has the right to take the freedom of another. Again, Omar repeats his apology to Sheikh Hunter for his weak language, but this time Omar uses an introductory statement to an Arabic letter, "From Omar to Sheikh Hunter" (Ibn Said 61). As Gould and Olney remark, the slave narrative consists of different literary genres, "an extremely mixed production" (Olney 49).

After these introductory parts, Omar provides information about his background: his name, birthplace, teachers' names and educational journey. After this necessary data, Omar writes about how he was taken captive up to the moment when he was sold to Johnson. Omar speaks about his life as an enslaved person, his escape from his master and then how he was captured again and imprisoned. After 16 days in jail, Omar got out of prison with the help of a man called Bob Mumford and then James Owen became his new master. A moment when Omar expresses his emotion is when a man called Mitchell asks Omar: "Would you walk to a place called Charleston?" Omar replies: "No, no, no, no, no, no, no – I will not walk to the place Charleston; I will stay in the hands of Jim Owen" (Ibn Said 65).

In fact, Omar's writings on the wall of the jail cell attracted the attention of Owen and others. However, Omar did not mention anything about his writing in the wall in the narrative. Possible interpretations are that Omar considered this action an unimportant moment in his account, or he tried to write what the ACS, and Sheikh Hunter, expected. For instance, as Patrick Horn assumes the ACS expected Omar to write about his conversion (49). This assumption leads to a further explanation for Omar's indirect anti-slavery position. This is because of his association with the ACS. This society aimed to free some enslaved people - those who were educated in particular - and transfer the free blacks to Africa in order to solve American racial

problems as well as for missionary purposes. Generally, as Alryyes remarks, ACS intellectuals were interested in enslaved African American Muslims because of their “literacy, education, and, surprisingly, . . . their Islamic religion” (14). Regarding Omar, Austin and Alryyes indicate the interest of the ACS members in him.⁹⁴ Therefore, possibly Omar was forced by the ACS to write about certain subjects. This assumption supports Horn’s claim that Omar “describes his conversion in language which suggests coercion” (51). Horn assumes that the white Christians might have compelled Omar to convert. He concludes that “Omar’s language is ambiguous, and read in translation, his original meaning is even more uncertain” (51). Further evidence that Omar possibly wanted the ACS to send him to Africa was his demonstration of his knowledge about Christianity, which could convince the ACS that he would serve as a missionary in his homeland. Alternatively, he simply wanted to show the similarities between these two beliefs, Christianity and Islam.⁹⁵

Unlike the non-Muslim antebellum slave narrative, Omar’s *Life* frequently praises his last master and his brother, John Owen, for being religious and treating him well, which has been described in Chapter 2. Although Omar was thankful for the good treatment, accepting slavery on his part was not affirmed. Omar depends on religion as his main basis and perspective in the narrative. Omar criticizes his first master, Johnson, based on religious grounds. He describes Johnson as “an infidel (*Kafir*) who did not fear Allah at all” (Ibn Said 63). He praises James and John Owen

⁹⁴ Alryyes also assumes that the ACS asked Omar to write his autobiography as criticism of Nat Turner’s rebellion in August 1831, “An autobiography by a ‘good’ slave might prove that all (literate) slaves were contemplating murder, that Turner’s was an isolated example” (17).

⁹⁵ Horn claims that “[i]f Omar’s life might be construed as a text of cultural syncretism, his contemporaries preferred to read it as a conversion narrative” (49).

and their wives and children for fearing Allah. Also, his description of Americans, their language, and the country as “Christian” are all based on religion. Only once does Omar use the word “black,” when a boy, who found him after his escape, told his father that “he saw a Sudanese man” (Ibn Said 63). Approximately, the word “Sudanese” refers to Omar’s closest term to convey the words, such as “Negro” and “black,” which were used by Americans at that time. Presumably, Omar wanted to show that the Western (American) description depended on race rather than religion. Another point worth mentioning is that Omar wrote his narrative during his enslavement, whereas Douglass and many other African Americans wrote their narratives only after they gained their freedom. Being an enslaved and elderly person and not mastering the English language had affected his involvement in political and social issues. Omar refers to freedom in an indirect way as many scholars believe, such as Hunwick, Alryyes, Osman and Forbes, by using verses from the Holy Quran and the Holy Bible as messages that affirm freedom and religious identity.

Generally, the *Life* has three introductions and its main points include brief information about Omar’s personal background and captive story, praise for his master and the latter’s family, and religious information about Christianity and Islam. Omar’s paragraphs and ideas look like they lack organization, however, they are related together through his religious framework. Osman and Forbes mention that Omar’s autobiography is not like other slave narratives which usually are about the “double quest for literacy and freedom” because Omar had already been educated before his enslavement. However, his literacy released him from the jail, but did not ensure his freedom from slavery like Ayyub’s and Abdr-Rahman’s. His narrative conveys a perspective of an enslaved person, unlike the typical non-Muslim slave narrative which was mostly written by ex-enslaved or fugitive narrators.

William Tamplin, in his article “Who Was ‘Umar ibn Sayyid? A Critical Reevaluation of the Translations and Interpretations of the *Life*,” claims that Omar had poor command of classical Arabic and criticizes Alryyes’s translation of the *Life* because he misrepresents the manuscript’s linguistic level (130). As an example, Tamplin claims that Omar’s poor Arabic led to him making spelling mistakes. An important point, that Tamplin does not consider, is that Omar wrote in Maghribi script, which has some different spelling rules to other Arabic scripts. Another point is that Omar might also have been influenced in writing his autobiography, as Tamplin does acknowledge (131), by his tribal language, Fulfulde or Fulani. Tamplin states that “[i]t is not un-reasonable to suggest that many of his mistakes may be Fulfulde or English calques” (131). Omar’s native language may also have influenced his sentence structure along with his spelling. The following is an excerpt from Omar’s *Life*, which illustrates some of these points and that they need not necessarily be considered “mistakes”:

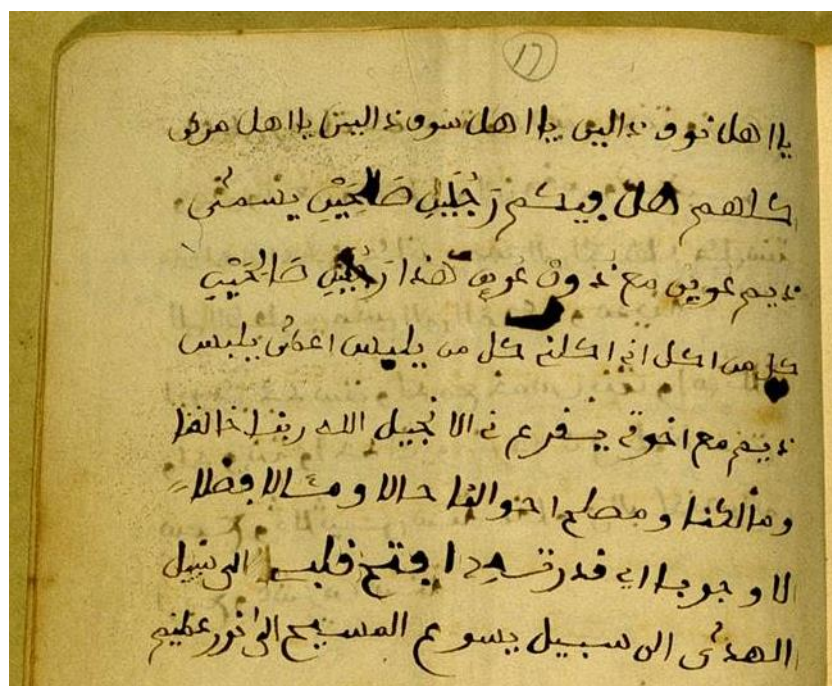


Figure 1: An excerpt from Omar’s *Life* (1831)

For instance, in the fifth line of the passage, Omar writes the word “يفرع” *yafra*’ which can be considered a misspelling of the Arabic verb “يقرأ” *yaqra*’, read, and grammatically incorrect since the subject is dual, James Owen and his brother, the verb should be “يقرآن” *yaqra’aan*. Alternatively, the word “يفرع” is an example of the influence of Maghribi script or Omar’s native language.

Tamplin possibly wants to read Omar’s passage in Modern Standard Arabic as below:

يا أهل كارولينا الشمالية، ويا أهل كارولينا الجنوبية، ويا أهل أمريكا جميعاً هل فيكم رجلان صالحان كجيم أوين وجون أوين؟ هذان رجلان صالحان كلما أكلنا أطعماني، وكلما لبسنا أعطياتي. جيم وأخوه يقرآن في الإنجيل الله ربنا خالقنا ومالكنا ومصلح أحوالنا حالاً ومالاً فضلاً لا وجوباً بقدرته، افتح قلبي إلى سبيل الهدى إلى سبيل يسوع المسيح إلى النور العظيم.

Alryyes’s translation of this passage is:

O, people of North Carolina; O, people of South Carolina; O, people of America, all of you: are there among you men as good as Jim Owen and John Owen? They are good men for whether they eat, I eat; and whether they wear they give me to wear. Jim with his brother read the Bible (*Ingeel*) that Allah is our Lord, our Creator, and our Owner and the restorer of our condition, health and wealth by grace and not duty. [Accordingly?] to my ability, open my heart to the right path, to the path of Jesus Christ, to a great light. (Ibn Said 67)

Even though Tamplin mentions the influence of Omar’s local language on writing his narrative, his misconception of the Maghribi script leads to his claim that Omar’s “Arabic is so bad to be almost incomprehensible” (127) and that Alryyes

mistranslated the *Life*. However, the comparison of the original Arabic passage with the translation proves that Alryyes's version is an apt interpretation and reflection of Omar's words for modern readers.

Another shortcoming of Tamplin's critique is that he does not consider literary perspectives in Omar's *Life*. His claim that Omar was weak in classical Arabic suggests that Omar's *Life* does not have literary values. As stated earlier, Omar was influenced by oral traditions in writing his autobiography. For instance, Omar used vocative style in speaking to people of North and South Carolina, and Americans in general. Omar's selection of the Quranic chapter at the beginning of his narrative and this passage previously quoted support that the narrative is influenced by oral traditions. The vocative style in his passage suggests that Omar wanted to draw the attention of his audience to the important information that he wanted to deliver. Another literary perspective is that Omar emphasizes reading as a main difference between the Owens and Johnson. He states that Johnson neither "read nor pray[ed]" (Ibn Said 77). According to Omar, reading is a key step in becoming virtuous. It is the path to modesty, truth and knowing God, thus it influences on one's physical and psychological features.

In spite of Omar's weaknesses in Arabic writing he himself confesses, his autobiography consists of different writing styles. Mainly, Omar uses straightforward sentences, but there are a few figures of speech, such as "open my heart" and "I continue in the hands of Jim Owen" (Ibn Said 79). Omar's language, according to Horn, is "ambiguous and allusive" (51). This feature of Omar's language can be understood as a way to hide his religious identity. In addition, he uses repetition in praising Owen and narrating the captivity story. Both Reynolds and Basima Shaheen

claim, separately, the influence on Omar's autobiography of other Arabic and Islamic literary genres as mentioned in Chapter 2. Shaheen states even though Omar's *Life* is linguistically and religiously different from the typical slave narrative, it "calls for a rather different angle of approach" (187) and to reconsider its inclusion in the American literary canon. In the same vein, Alryyes states that Omar's Arabic autobiography "plays a part in American literary and cultural history . . . [T]he *Life* is a document no less fundamental to the reconstruction of a singular life than to the understanding of an important, and largely unstudied, episode in the annals of American slave thought" (4). As the above discussion presents, Omar's *Life* does indeed have literary merits, which disproves Tamplin's argument.

Writing in languages other than English by enslaved people can be seen as a characteristic or a technique in the slave narrative which has received inadequate scholarly attention to date. For example, why did some enslaved African American Muslims prefer writing in Arabic in the New World where it is not a local language? Was it to indicate their literacy or to achieve other purposes? Shaheen believes that Omar's usage of "[t]he Arabic language insulated him from the danger of his text being fully comprehended by his masters and their society, and he therefore had an opportunity to indict slavery from an Islamic perspective, undetected" (189). Omar, in fact, describes the English language as a "Christian language." His description suggests a reason for why he did not transliterate his narrative. Omar did not master the English language to write his narrative. He would have been able to transliterate his English words into Arabic characters in writing the *Life*, however he did not choose that. Timothy Marr remarks that:

Omar identified English as the “Christian language” and his Arabic script signified the passport of his literacy and his religion as well as a transoceanic resource preventing others from accurately interpreting the meaning of his words. His continuing use of the Arabic language, which he called “the talk of the Maghreb,” also empowered him with a strategy of resistance that Édouard Glissant has called “opacity”—“the welcoming opaqueness through which the other escapes me.” (538)

Wail S. Hassan, in book *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature* (2011), criticizes Gates’s theory of *The Signifying Monkey* (1988) for not considering Arabic Muslims’ writings and representing the multilingualism in the United States (223-224). Hassan states, which is a good conclusion to the discussion of Omar’s *Life* and the American literary canon, that “[t]he national, in other words, is always already multiple and polyglot, and American literature, if by that we understand not restricted canon of old but totality of American literature in all its ethnic and multilingual diversity is a prime example of that” (224).

4.3.3 Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua

An Interesting Biography of Mahommah Baquaqua, which is sixty-six pages in length, was published in 1854. The narrative has a different structure from the typical African American slave narrative. According to Robin Law, “its narrative structure is somewhat shapeless and rambling. But as regards its contents, it is of enormous interest” (121). The *Biography* starts with a list of numbers and combines two literary categories, biography and autobiography, which is different from the

antebellum slave narrative. It conveys information that deals with Africa, South America and North America.

The *Biography* consists of a list of numbers, a preface by Samuel Downing Moore, seven chapters and a poem. These contents can be categorized into four parts: introduction, biography, autobiography and an appendix.⁹⁶ The introduction consists of “Numbers” and “Preface and Compiler’s Notes.” These two sections authenticate and validate Mahommah’s story. The second part, “Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquauqa,” consists of the first six chapters that mainly deal with Mahommah’s homeland; Chapter I, Chapter II: “Government in Africa,” Chapter III: “Appearance and Situation of the Country,” Chapter IV: “Agriculture, Art, &c.,” Chapter V: “Manners, Customs, &c.” and Chapter VI: “Marriage Ceremonies, &c.” This part is in third-person narration. The third part is the autobiography, Chapter VII “Mahommah’s Early Life & c.,” and has two subheadings, “The Slave Ship” and “Lines spoken by Mahommah,” to emphasize a poem read by himself. This part is mostly narrated in the first person with some lines in the third person. “Prayer of the Oppressed,” a poem written by James Monroe Whitfield, an African American poet, functions as the appendix to this narrative.

Mahommah’s narrative starts with a list of numbers from one to one thousand in Dendi, which Law and Lovejoy assume as his African language. According to Austin, listing the numbers may refer to Mahommah’s intellectuality (*Transatlantic Stories* 161). Muhammed Al-Ahari states that “[a]pparently, Mahommah thought

⁹⁶ Regarding the appendix, the *Biography* does not have a section that is assigned as “Appendix,” but at the end of the narrative, Mahommah writes his name and it is then followed by a poem. Arguably, writing his name suggests the end of the narrative, whereas the poem is the appendix.

doing such would show his innate intelligence and recommend the value of his cause” (34). Perhaps Mahommah lists the numbers as a way to indicate and authenticate his case as an African and an enslaved person in Brazil. Or alternatively, he wanted to show American merchants his knowledge in numbers, in case they wanted an agency in Africa. Next comes the “Preface and Compiler’s Notes” in which the compiler, Moore, validates Mahommah’s story, as the typical antebellum African American slave narrative. Moore writes that the descriptions of the narrative come “from the mouth of a native who has passed through all the places described, in the interior of a country like Africa” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 597). Therefore, perhaps, he lists the numbers in his native language also as part of his cultural background.

In the preface, Moore presents two objectives of the narrative, which are propaganda for abolition and missionary activities. Regarding the anti-slavery purpose, Moore calls for the “the abolition of slavery all over the world” and describes slavery as “a cursed sin” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 596). Concerning the propaganda for missionary purposes, the narrative is written for raising funds “to return again to his native land, to instruct his own people in the ways of the gospel of Christ, and to be the means of their salvation” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 596). It is questionable whether these objectives and motivations are Mohommah’s or the abolitionists’. This leads to the question of authenticity, which will be discussed later. However, it was Mahommah’s motivation to write the narrative as he states, he “came to the conclusion that the time had arrived when . . . [he] might with propriety commit to paper all that has been recounted in this work” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 643). As Law states Mahommah’s “commitment to Christian evangelisation might have been a device to procure his return to Africa (133) and Austin assumes a similar

idea (*Transatlantic* 160), there is a further purpose of Mahommah's narrative through raising money to go back home without the interest of spreading Christianity.

Moore confesses that the *Biography* is written in a simple style so all readers can access it, "the work as readable and clear as possible to the capacities of all classes of readers" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 595). It is an interesting narrative, as stated in its title, which aims to "attract abolitionists, geographers, Christians, and other sympathizers by the cover" (Turkistani 180). This simplicity in style leads some scholars to criticize the work and its author and editor. Austin states that Mahommah's narrative "is not adequately organized for the scholar. Indeed, the only principle of construction followed seems to be chronology" (*Sourcebook* 589) and both Mahommah and Moore are naïve (Austin, *Transatlantic* 160 and *Sourcebook* 589). Similarly, Law remarks that the narrative "is not the most substantial or interesting example of the genre. It is a brief work, of only sixty-six pages; and its literary merit is slight. It is written in a simple, indeed naïve style" (Law 121). The "naiveté of both men," according to Austin, leads the narrative to have an "unresolved two-part structure," the biography and the autobiography. The biographical part aims to attract a wide range of readers before presenting Mahommah's life and his enslavement experience. As Moore states in the preface:

it is simply a compilation or narration of events happening in the life of the man himself who narrates them, and given without any figured speech, but in the plainest style possible; all the phrases used are "familiar as household words." consequently it will be easily understood by all who read it; it is written so plainly in point of

speech, that “he who runs may read.” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 597)

In contrast to Austin’s claim, Moore presumably narrates the background of Mahommah’s homeland to give credit and reliability on Mahommah before Mahommah took over in telling his life story. This means that the biographical part, to some extent, is a continuation of the preface’s function of authenticating Mahommah and his narrative.

Moving now through the chapters of the biographical part, Chapter I gives an account about the Mahommah’s birth place, Zoozoo or Djougou, his parents, and Islamic practices, such as prayers and fasting. The narrative does not provide dates of Mahommah’s birth, similar to Douglass, who did not know his birth information. Moore states that Africans use “a different mode of dividing time and reckoning age” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 598). This ignorance, as Turkistani claims, is due to the “cultural difference rather than real ignorance of time and date” (183). Moore estimates that Mahommah was about thirty years old during the time of writing the narrative. Presumably, Mahommah told Moore about the dates and numbers regarding time in Dendi. However, the latter found difficulty in writing or recalling this numerical information therefore he preferred not to write them in the *Biography*.

Chapter II to Chapter VI, the other chapters of the biographical part, aim to reverse the Enlightenment stereotypes concerning Africans by reflecting that Africa has social orders and laws that organized their lives. Also, Mahommah draws similarities between African and Western culture in order to lessen the differences between them. For example, regarding his description of gates of his hometown, Mahommah states “[t]he entrance into the city, is through six gates, which bear the

names of their respective keepers, something similar to the city of London and most of the old fortified towns in England, and indeed of most parts of the old country” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 602). Additionally, the chapters discuss Mahommah’s homeland from different dimensions: geographically, religiously, economically and socially. The descriptions and discussions of these aspects possibly aim to attract different readers who may have interest in investing in Africa or may ask Mahommah to arrive there. Particularly, Mahommah’s account was the first about his homeland since it had not been earlier described by Western travelers. For instance, Mahommah mentions that “[t]he cotton tree there [in Djougou] grows very large, and the cotton is of good quality” (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 604), which may suggest that he knew about the interests of American traders and merchants and wanted to attract them to invest there. Mahommah also addresses Americans and particularly botanists, in this case, by stating, that “[t]he people of America can have no idea of the size and beauty of some of the trees in Africa” (qtd. Austin, *Sourcebook* 602). Furthermore, in these chapters, Mahommah does not just reverse the Western stereotypes, but he also presents African stereotypes concerning white people and compares manners in American and African societies. This comparison of stereotypes concerning both cultures conveys the idea of humanity resisting negative racial theories concerning Africans.

The biographical part ends with an emphasis on the missionary and anti-slavery objectives. According to the narrative, missionary activities would solve the problem of wars in Africa and in the world as whole, “When the Gospel, with its beauteous truths are fully understood and appreciated by the people generally, peace and good will shall reign supreme, and ‘wars and rumors of wars,’ shall be no more forever” (qtd. Austin, *Sourcebook* 610). The chapters of the biographical part

familiarize the reader with Mahommah and his culture, so to later garner sympathy for Mahommah in the autobiographical part, where he discusses his experience in slavery.

The autobiographical part firstly gives accounts about Mahommah's family, education, different jobs, first enslavement in Africa, capture and movements in Africa toward the transatlantic slave ship. Despite Austin's claim that Mahommah's narrative is simply chronologically structured, it actually integrates a lot of ideas and information about Africa and African life styles with the events and experiences in his life. Throughout the journey from his captivation to the slave ship, Mahommah seems an adventurer more than an enslaved person. This can be seen in the description of the places and manners. For example, Mahommah describes the ways of firing grass and hunting animals. Simultaneously, he challenges stereotypes, which the biographical part aims to reverse too. Additionally, in some parts of the autobiographical section he gives a religious reflection on his previous life before his conversion. This reinforces Dabovic's belief that Mahommah's narrative is a religious autobiography, "Moore employs elements of the spiritual autobiography. Apparently, Mahommah's narrative rests on the symbolic representations of 'sacred wit' based on Christian teleology" ("Displacement" 149). This conveys a similarity between Mahommah and Gronniosaw concerning their enslavement being the road to find their religious identities.

Furthermore, in the autobiographical part, Mahommah also explains his experiences in the transatlantic slave ship and in Brazilian slavery system. These parts expose Mahommah's attitude against slave trade and slavery. The anti-slavery theme is clear in Mahommah's narrative more than in other narratives by enslaved

African American Muslims. In particular, Mahommah describes the Middle Passage⁹⁷ and its horror until the ship arrived in the New World with emotional appeal as typical slave narratives (Turkistani 269-270), whereas the other enslaved African American Muslims mention in their narratives the time period of the voyage, such as Omar, or do not mention the voyage at all, such as Abdr-Rahman. Mahommah gives accounts and stories about other enslaved victims, which is another difference between his narrative and the other narratives by enslaved African American Muslims. Similar to Abdur-Rhaman and Douglass, Mahommah wrote his narrative after he obtained his freedom. Unlike Abdur-Rahman, who had enslaved offspring, and Omar, who was enslaved, Mahommah felt free to express directly his anti-slavery attitudes in his narrative.

The autobiographical part also presents Mahommah's escape from slavery and his life after securing his freedom. After his escape from slavery, he travelled to Haiti with the help of abolitionists and there he became associated with the American Baptist Free Mission Society through Rev. William Judd and his wife. The Society helped Mahommah to obtain education at New York Central College in order to, in his word, "educate me preparatory to going to my own people in Africa, to preach the Gospel of glad tidings of great joy to the ignorant and benighted of my fellow countrymen" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 638). Similar to Douglass's *Narrative*, the double quests, for learning and freedom, are obvious in Mahommah's *Biography*. Despite the fact that Mahommah had opportunities to be educated in his homeland in the Islamic schools, he did not like schools and ran away. A difference between

⁹⁷ Except Muhammad Ali Said (Nicholas Said) who did not experience the Middle Passage. He was enslaved and taken through the Sahara Desert as discussed in Chapter 2.

Douglass and Mahommah is that Douglass educated himself during his enslavement and for the purpose of gaining his freedom, whereas Mahommah attempted to obtain education after he gained his liberty. Mahommah's purposes in seeking education were to go back to Africa and to proselytize Christianity.

Mahommah left the College after three years because of racism directed to him from students who, as he narrates, "did not altogether like my color, played considerable many practical jokes upon me, and tried to make me some mischief with the principals. They played all sorts of tricks upon me" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 641). Later, Mahommah travelled to Canada. He states regarding his life in Canada that:

I was kindly treated by all classes wherever I went, and must say in my heart I never expected to receive in a nation so distant from my native home, so much kindness, attention and humanity. I am thankful to God that I enjoy the blessings of liberty, in peace and tranquility, and that I am now in a land where "none dare make me afraid," where every man can or may "sit down under his own vine, and under his own fig tree:" where every man acting as a man, no matter what his color, is regarded as a brother, and where all are equally free to do and to say. (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 642)

Mahommah was happy for being at the service of his master during a voyage to New York, he states that "[w]e all had learned, that at New York there was no slavery; that it was a free country and that if we once got there we had nothing to dread from our cruel slave masters, and we were all most anxious to get there" and he called New York the "land of freedom" (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 631). Even though

New York was the land where he got his liberty, when Mahommah faced American racism, he moved further north to Canada where he found justice and equality. This point suggests that Mahommah did not see himself as an American citizen like Douglass. Consequently, Mahommah's narrative has been marginalized in the discussion of African American slave narrative. A further related reason for marginalizing Mahommah's narrative, as Law and Lovejoy mention, is that Mahommah was in Canada during the publication of his narrative (3). Mahommah was in Canada, as Law and Lovejoy remark, "probably in late January or February 1854, and the text had been completed by 4 July of the same year, when Baquaqua [Mahommah] reported in one of his extent letters that it was 'ready to press' and he was seeking assistance in meeting the costs of printing" (8).

Despite these points, Mahommah's narrative conveys social and political issues in the United States that are worth reading. Austin remarks that Mahommah's narrative:

on his escape in New York City offer glimpses of a seaports. Its personal account of U.S. missionaries in Haiti provides an uncommon African viewpoint. And its black student's description of the only pre-Civil War American college to boast African American professors—although he does not mention any of the three directly—is, so far, unique. (Austin, *Transatlantic* 160).

Besides, Mahommah gave speeches about parts of his life before writing his narrative to audiences of Baptists and abolitionists⁹⁸ (Law 131), which indicates his

⁹⁸ According to Dabovic, Mahommah had "vast experiences to speak on the various abolitionist circuits" in Canada ("Displacement" 181).

participation in the anti-slavery debate. From another perspective, Mahommah was “a type of activist,” as Dabovic states, by his attempts to change Western stereotypes concerning Africans (“Displacement” 147). These facts assert the political participation of Mahommah.

The autobiographical part of the narrative ends with the missionary objective, “Should a call be given him to return once more to the land of his birth, he will cheerfully respond, and is sure friends will not be wanting to aid him in his benevolent purpose” (qtd. Austin, *Sourcebook* 643). The appendix is a poem entitled “Prayer of the Oppressed” which has an anti-slavery theme and discusses it from a religious perspective which could be an imitation of Douglass’s appendix poem, which he quotes from the Holy Bible. Douglass’s appendix poem criticizes the false southern slaveholder Christians, whereas Mahommah’s appendix poem presents a global context and supports preaching Christianity in Africa. The poem addresses enslaved Africans, “See Afric’s sons and daughters toil,” whereas Douglass considers himself and other enslaved people as American citizens. In fact, scholars, such as Dabovic, Law and Lovejoy, remark that Whitfield, the poet of Mahommah’s appendix poem, was “in debates with Frederick Douglass during this period over the issue of African American emigration to Africa” (Dabovic, “Displacement” 182). This highlights Mahommah’s aim and intention to return to Africa and did not consider the United States as his country. Sources have revealed that Mahommah travelled to England after the publication of his narrative. According to Al-Ahari, “by 1857[,] he was in England awaiting a ship to go to Africa” (34). Why did he publish his narrative in the United States rather than in Canada or Haiti, for instance? Arguably, the issue of abolishing slavery and the reception of the slave narratives

were more established and institutionalized in the United States rather than in Canada is the fact that led Mahommah to publish his narrative in the United States.

Two significant issues that highlight the complexity of the *Biography* are its authenticity and authorship. This in turn raises the question of whether this narrative is a biography or an autobiography. Turkistani describes the narrative as a biographical/ autobiographical narrative (180). Law and Lovejoy question the type of narrative “whether it is biography, autobiography, or in fact something else: a co-authored work that is part biography of Baquaqua [Mahommah] and part descriptive account of homeland, in whose production Moore served as scribe, in the process sometimes getting details wrong” (11). Austin comments that “The *Biography* is very strangely organized” (*Transatlantic* 161). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson write in their book *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* that there “are texts that combine biographical and autobiographical modes of narration” (7). Olney remarks, for instance, that Bibb’s *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1849) “is committed to two conventional forms, the slave narrative and the novel of sentiment, and caught by both it is unable to transcend either” (62). From Arabic literary traditions, Dwight Reynolds comments that *sira* had two types:

biographical and autobiographical . . . [and they] were not initially distinguished from one another. The genre, as such, consisted of the literary representation of a life as a subgenre of history and did not differentiate between first-person and third-person texts; and as some autobiographical texts were also written in the third person, the texts themselves were at times not formally different. (39)

Mahommah did not reach the required level of reading to have read these types of *sira*. Arguably, he was influenced by oral *sira*, which was read by scholars to the public.⁹⁹ Generally, the definition of slave narrative as a genre in this present study considers both biographical and autobiographical accounts. Despite the facts that the title describes the narrative as “*Biography*” and most of the chapters belong to the biographical part, arguably the narrative is more autobiographical. Mahommah’s voice is clear in the narrative and through the information that he gave about his homeland. Particularly, the biographical part, which presents background information concerning mostly Mahommah’s homeland, can be considered as an exposition of the plot, whereas the autobiographical part is mostly the slave narrative and conveys the rest of the plot elements.

Authenticity is one of the frequent points of dispute concerning the antebellum slave narratives, even though many of them indicated they were written by the enslaved or ex-enslaved narrator by stating: *Written by Himself or Herself*. Many scholars, such as Gould and Olney,¹⁰⁰ claim that abolitionists had strongly affected the slave narrative. Gould claims that “[t]he abolitionist lecture circuit was an important development in shaping the style and content of the antebellum slave narrative. Most slave narrators made their names as speakers before they became writers per se” (“The Rise”19). Since Austin treats the narrative as Moore’s text in his *Sourcebook*, he concludes that the shift between biography and autobiography

⁹⁹ See Ousmane Kane (87-88).

¹⁰⁰ Olney states in his article that “[t]he lives of the narratives are never, or almost never, there for themselves and for their own intrinsic, unique interest but nearly always in their capacity as illustrations of what slavery is really like. Thus in one sense the narrative lives of the ex-slaves were as much possessed and used by the abolitionists as their actual lives had been by slaveholders” (51).

indicates “[c]learly the latter [Moore] had lost control except in his several didactic apostrophes, and in his deciding to close without providing a conclusion. Both men seem to have been ‘naifs’; and this too, is significant. The subject tells all, the editor records all, in this most candid and relaxed narrative” (*Sourcebook* 589). Law and Lovejoy have a different view from Austin’s claim of ascribing the narrative’s authorship to Moore. They conclude that the narrative was under Mahommah’s control through copyright information, the cover page, and a review of the narrative along with Mahommah’s declaration in one of his letters that “Moore was only a hired assistant” and a compiler more than reviser (9-11). However, borrowing their words, they declare that:

This is not to deny that there are particular sections of the text which represent the voice of Moore rather than of Baquaqua [Mahommah]. Some passages, including many of the elaborated instances of abolitionist rhetoric, are distinguished by a more pretentiously literary style and embellished with bits of poetry and other quotations, and these almost certainly represent Moore’s hand. (10-11)

Law and Lovejoy discuss some aspects that make Mahommah’s narrative different from typical non-Muslim African American slave narratives. These factors are his presence in Canada during the narrative’s publication, African birth, and enslavement in the Brazilian slavery system. Despite these reasons, Law and Lovejoy still believe that Mahommah’s narrative is invaluable “as one of the very few recorded African voices in the history of the transatlantic slave trade; even less do they justify the almost total neglect which has met until recently” (5). From a literary perspective, Mahommah’s narrative is unique because it merges the characteristics of

early and antebellum slave narratives presenting the themes of salvation, criticizing the slave trade and the institution of slavery.

Publication of the narrative is another aspect that makes a difference between Douglass and Mahommah. The circulation of Mahommah's narrative is poor compared to Douglass's *Narrative*. It was not widely circulated nor reviewed during the time of its publication. According to Law, "only a single brief review of it [Mahommah's *Biography*], . . . was published in the journal *The American Baptist*, an organ of the American Baptist Free Missionary Society, to which Baquaqua [Mahommah] was affiliated" (122).¹⁰¹ The circulation of the narrative then had consequences for its reception by the general public and literary critics. In addition, Mahommah did not continue writing other works like Douglass even though he intended to compose a longer version of the narrative which would reflect his visit to Africa as a missionary. This fact does not prevent us from appreciating his *Biography* as a literary text, which would deepen the field of the slave narrative.

4.4 Conclusion

Douglass's *Narrative* had not been a canonical text during his lifetime because it "complicates, qualifies, and sometimes undermines the theme of canonical writings by Emerson, Thoreau, and the other main figures of the American literary renaissance" (Cain 11). However, later on in the twentieth century it did become a canonical literary work. Douglass's book-length narrative, his being self-made man, and his writings after his first narrative all indicate his commitment to fight slavery and racism and his interest and involvement in cultural and social issues of his country. These also are factors that have contributed in his becoming a canonical

¹⁰¹ See also Dabovic ("Displacement" 144).

figure. In the introduction of his book *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-century African American Literature*, Eric Gardner presents the problem of taking Douglass and Harriet Jacobs's works as the main representative literary works of the nineteenth-century African American literature and ignoring other literary texts. Gardner states:

I am, however, deeply troubled when tokenism leads to ahistorical misreadings of texts (and authors); to the reduction of a large, rich, and wondrously complex and conflicted body of literature to single supposedly representative texts, and to generalizations by scholars who have not taken the time to understand what we know—and what we don't know—of the black literary nineteenth century. (8)

The narratives by enslaved African American Muslims represent a part of the nineteenth-century United States. Marginalizing these narratives gives an incomplete picture of the slave narrative genre.

Each of the discussed enslaved African American Muslim texts presents different characteristics that enlarge the scope of the field of slave narrative, Abdr-Rahman's translated narrative, Omar's Arabic autobiography and Mahommah's biographical/autobiographical narrative. Robert Stepto's phases of slave narrative narration neglect the discussion of translated slave narratives. Since *Abduhl Rahahman, The Unfortunate Moorish Prince* was translated by the ACS, it could be recognized and positioned between an eclectic narrative, as Ayyub's testimony, and an integrated narrative. As an integrated narrative, it is narrated in the first-person, in which Abdr-Rahman's voice and that of the ACS are united. However, the rediscovery of the original Arabic manuscript may suggest another position of the

narrative presumably in the third phases as a generic narrative, where Abdr-Rahman's voice would be clearer. Similarly, Mahommah's *Biography* simultaneously fits into the first and second phases of Stepto's categorization. In the first phase, it is eclectic narrative due to the voice of Moore and its unusual organization: numbers, biography and autobiography. In the case of the second phase, Chapter VII is an integrated narrative. In this chapter of the *Biography*, Mahommah's voice, as a first-person narration, and Moore's voice are united. Stepto's phases also ignore narratives written in languages other than English. A potential position of Omar's *Life* is in the third phase as a generic narrative, similar to Douglass's *Narrative*. Stepto describes the generic narrative as the tale of an enslaved narrator that authenticates itself rather than documents (*From Behind*, 4). Omar wrote his narrative in a language—Arabic—which could not be easily filtered by abolitionists or white editors.

Regarding the literary values of narratives by enslaved African American Muslims, Turkistani believes that "Muslim slave writing may have little or no artistic value, in comparison to Douglass's *Narrative*, for example, because neither the slaves' nor the mediators' original interest was artistic" (279). Scholars have claimed that slave narratives are aesthetically poor. Starling asserts that "[t]he slave narratives, on the whole, are admittedly low in artistic value" (294). Butterfield believes that "there can be no such thing as a 'purely aesthetic' standard of evaluating slave narrative literature" (88). Starling makes some exceptions by stating that "[s]ome of the narratives achieve a degree of literary distinction in some passages, and the narrative of Equiano and Douglass are readily acceptable as literary achievements" (294). Waters reviews scholars' gradual literary appreciation of slave narrative as a genre (34). Narratives by enslaved African American Muslims have

demonstrated, as many historians argue, their importance as historical documents in American literary history. More critical discussions and analyses would gradually help these narratives to get appreciation and therefore a possible position in the American literary canon. In fact, when Turkistani did his dissertation, the original manuscript of Omar ibn Said's *Life* had not been found yet. Turkistani used its translation. Indeed, Omar's *Life* uses Arabic and Islamic literary genres. Abdr-Rhaman's narrative used straightforward language without figures of speech, but due to the absence of the original manuscript, it is unknown whether his original narrative has literary qualities or was influenced by his education, as was Omar's narrative. Mahommah's narrative has some literary styles and clear characteristics of the typical antebellum slave narrative, more than the other two narratives by Omar and Abdr-Rahman. According to Dabovic, Mahommah "appropriates various western literary genres, such as the spiritual autobiography and the heroic fugitive tradition, writes himself into the displaced regions between dominant and marginal discourses and documents a mode of resistance based on living a life of hybridity, camouflage and mobility" ("Displacement" 144-145). As shown in this chapter, these enslaved Muslims challenged Western stereotypes that justified the slave trade and slavery. Being African-born and educated narrators attracted missionary and pro-colonization societies to use them for religious and commercial purposes. The associations with these societies had a role in presenting Omar and Mahommah's texts as religious/conversion autobiographies. Studying these texts reflects that slave narrative is not exclusively about the horrors of enslavement. They also reflect other elements of diverse enslaved communities and perspectives of nineteenth-century American political and social life.

Chapter 5: Positioning Postbellum Mohammad Ali Ben Said's (Nicholas Said) *Autobiography*

Very few studies have discussed *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said; a Native of Bornou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa*. Said is not discussed in Abdulhafeez Turkistani's dissertation "Muslim Slaves and Their Narratives: Religious Faith and Cultural Accommodation" (1995) presumably due to the period of the slave narrative and to the fact that he did not experience slavery in the New World. Florence Marfo in her article "African Muslims in African American Literature" (2009) discusses possible reasons why commentators on African American literature have excluded enslaved African Muslims from the anthologies. Regarding Said, Marfo assumes a possible reason for exclusion, which is that he seemed to be satisfied with being an enslaved person rather than showing an anti-slavery attitude. However, Allan Austin states that Said's story "is one of the few substantial lives we have of antebellum Africans in America who were not slaves" (*Sourcebook* 655). Ralph Keen comments on the back cover of Said's *Autobiography* edited by Precious Rasheeda Muhammad, that the discovery of this narrative is "a significant addition to the canon of African-American writing." This chapter aims to position Said's *Autobiography* in American literature through reviewing criticism on postbellum slave narratives and analyzing the text.

5.1 General Characteristics of the Postbellum Slave Narrative

Many narratives were written by former enslaved African Americans after the Civil War. Examples of these postbellum narratives are Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes* (1868), Henry Clay Bruce's *The New Man* (1895), George Henry's *Life of George Henry* (1894), and Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1900). In his

book *Slave Narratives after Slavery* (2011), William Andrews states that “fifty-four more book-length narratives by formerly enslaved Americans . . . appeared” between 1866 and 1900 (viii). Andrews discusses in his essay “Slave Narrative, 1865-1900” (2014), which is similar to his introduction to *Slave Narratives after Slavery*, some characteristics of the postbellum slave narrative. He states that this narrative “was the most democratic literary genre by African Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (“Slave” 220). One prominent feature of postbellum slave narratives, as Andrews, Charles Heglar Jr. and Frances Foster remark, is the emphasis on postwar achievements rather than on the presentation of the ill-treatment of slavery as the center of the narrative (Heglar 12). Frances Foster states in *Witnessing Slavery* that:

These works [postbellum narratives], however, did not dwell upon the horrors of their writers’ past conditions of servitude but were instead cheerleading exercises to urge continued opportunities for integration of blacks into American society or to depict black contributions to the Horatio Alger tradition. Their descriptions of slavery were mild and offered as “historical” evidence only. (150)

However, the reference to their enslavement experience still is the main shared theme between antebellum and postbellum slave narratives. Andrews sees the postbellum slave narratives as “not only a reassessment of national crime that had led to the Civil War; . . . also [it] gave while America a renewed introduction to those for whose freedom the war had purportedly been fought” (“Slave” 229).

Postbellum slave narratives were not written for the white audience as were the antebellum slave narrative. Andrews states that both antebellum and postbellum

slave narratives try to assert the dignity of the narrator. The antebellum enslaved narrator escaped slavery to maintain his or her selfhood that slavery and slaveholders aimed to destroy. On the other hand, the postbellum slave narrator asserted his or her dignity and selfhood and endured slavery until it was abolished. Andrews comments that “the measure of a slave’s dignity is much more pragmatic than existential, more public than private, than it is in the most famous antebellum narratives” (“Slave” 221). Self-improvement and community development are also important features in the postbellum slave narrative (Andrews, *Slave* xxiv). Postbellum narrators were “as stewards of the welfare of a larger group” during the Reconstruction Era (Andrews, “Slave” 223).

5.2 Analysis and Characteristics of Said’s *Autobiography*

The Autobiography of Nicholas Said has a dedication to Rev. A. J. Witherspoon,¹⁰² a preface, 13 identifiable chapters and a supplementary chapter. Unlike Omar, Said did not apologize for his writing in the preface even though he describes it as “ill-written pages” (1). Said writes that “[a]s I glance over them, I cannot but be painfully reminded of their intrinsic unworthiness; yet, I offer no apology for their appearance” (1). In his earlier autobiographical article “A Native of Bornoo” (1867), Said apologizes for his English since it is not his mother language and he did not learn English in school. It appears that Said had more self-confidence regarding his English language in his *Autobiography* than when he wrote “A Native of Bornoo.” However, he presents his knowledge and achievements with humility as Omar did. Said clearly states his motivation in writing his autobiography, which is “a desire to show the world the possibilities that may be accomplished by the African”

¹⁰² Said mentions in the Supplementary Chapter that Rev. A. J. Witherspoon helped him in publishing the *Autobiography*.

(1). He desires: “my humble example may stimulate *some at least* of my people to systematic efforts in the direction of mental culture and improvement” (1). So Said’s motivation was to challenge the widespread stereotype toward Africans.

This motivation fits the characteristic of the postbellum slave narrative in calling for self-development and community advancement. For instance, Andrews quotes Lucy Ann Delaney’s question in her postbellum narrative *From the Darkness Cometh Light* (1891) about the eligibility of African Americans during the Reconstruction Era, “Can the negro race succeed, proportionately, as well as the whites, if given the same chance and an equal start?” (qtd. in Andrews, “Slave” 224). In Chapter 1 of the *Autobiography*, as will be discussed below, Said attempts to challenge the view of Africans as ignorant and indicates that Africans established civilizations. A significant point here is that Said did not want a respected white American to write the preface of his narrative. Since slavery was abolished, there was no need to authenticate a narrative. In addition, Said wanted to show as his motivation, that an African can write his/her narrative without the help of whites. His intended audience was both black and white Americans, unlike that of the antebellum African American slave narratives, which were written to be read by whites.

In Chapter 1, “Early Life and Historical Sketch of His Native Country,” Said provides background information about himself; and Bornu’s political and historical issues, social classes and natural resources. Said starts his first chapter with the statement of “I was born,” which is a common opening on the African American slave narrative.¹⁰³ In this chapter, Said attempts to reverse stereotypes concerning Africa as an uncivilized continent: “Africa has been, through prejudice and

¹⁰³ See also Austin (*Transatlantic* 175).

ignorance, so sadly misrepresented, that anything like intelligence, industry, etc., is believed not to exist among its natives” (6). Said starts with the stereotypes against Africa and then focuses on its people, who were enslaved in different parts of the world. For instance, Said discusses in Chapter 13 Africans in Haiti and the United States.

Chapter 2 “The Capture”, as discussed earlier in the study’s Chapter 2, is about his education in Africa and then how he was taken captive. Chapter 1 to the middle of Chapter 2 is the exposition of the narrative. Chapter 3, “Crossing the Desert,” and Chapter 4, “Journey to Tripoli,” describe the journey from Said’s homeland to Tripoli, home of his third master, Hadji Daoud. Chapter 5, “A Slave in Tripoli,” conveys parts of Said’s educational development through learning the Turkish language. Also, Said challenges old Western stereotypes about Turks: “I feel constrained to say, that of all the nationalities of people I have seen in my life, I like the Turks the best. They have the name, abroad, of being extremely fierce and cruel, but the contrary is true” (37). Arguably, Said mentions the Turks because of the political struggle between the Muslims and the United States in the late eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Robert J. Allison’s article “The United States and Barbary Coast Slavery” discusses different American literary and diplomatic reactions toward their victory against North African Muslims. Between the period of the 1790s and 1815, the United States had a war against Algeria (1801-1805) and it had another war against Tripoli, both of which it won. According to Allison, some American scholars celebrated this triumph. For example, Joseph Hanson wrote an epic poem about the American victory against Tripoli, *The Musselmen Humbled, or, a Heroic Poem in*

Celebration of the Bravery Displayed by the American Tars, in the Contest with Tripoli (1806). Hanson criticizes and insults the Tripolitans (152). Furthermore, Said draws comparison of Muslims' attitudes toward Jews and Christians. He provides a reason for Muslims' intolerant attitude toward Christians.

The Mohammedans had not forgotten the bombardment their city received from some Christian men-of-war, years before, on account of the mistreatment of some Christians; and, in consequence, were wisely circumspect in their conduct towards them. (38-39)

Said's statement presumably refers to the same political struggle between North African Muslims and the United States.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are mostly a travel narrative. These chapters describe places that Hadji Daoud and Said travelled through on their way to and from Makkah, where they went for pilgrimage. Near the end of Chapter 8, a dramatic event occurs when Said's master decides to sell him. Chapter 9, "In Constantinople," presents a new development in Said's life which is his contact with political European leaders. Considering the *Autobiography* as a slave narrative, Chapter 10, "In Odessa and St. Petersburg," is the climax of the text since Said gets his freedom. He states that "I could not be a serf under the 'free' laws of that empire [Russia]; and his excellency [Prince Mentchikoff] had notified me, on my arrival at the capital, that I was free, and at liberty to go whithersoever I chose" (Said 73). Said decides to go back to his homeland, which is the falling action of the *Autobiography* as a slave narrative. However, his master promises to send Said back to Africa and support him with money after Said reaches the age of twenty-five.

However, the bad treatment of Prince Mentchikoff's servants in his absence leads Said to leave Mentchikoff's house, which marks a new beginning to Said's story in the plot of the narrative. Chapter 11, "Discription [sic] of St. Petersburg," and Chapter 12, "Journeys in Russia and Austria," describe Said's life and travels with Prince Nicholas Troubetzkoÿ. A significant point in Chapter 11 is Said's conversion to Christianity. Said's narration of his conversion complicates understanding his true identity. Quoting Said at length:

I was baptized in Riga on the 12th of November, 1855, leaving my Mohammedan name of *Mohammed Ali Ben Said* at the font, and bearing therefrom the Christian name of Nicholas. This performance ended, I thought the job was complete, but the next day the *papa*, or priest who had me baptized, sent for me, and on getting where he was, I found myself in a beautiful chapel, handsomely paved with marble of different colors. He caused me to kneel before an immense *tableau* of the Saviour for hours, asking pardons for my past sins.

As the marble was harder than my knees, I was in perfect agony during the greater portion of the time, and became so enraged with the *papa*, that I fear I committed more sins during that space of time than I had done in days before.

In fact, I am not sure but that a few ungainly Mohammedan asperities of language bubbled up to my lips. But I managed to get through without any overt act of rebellion.

When I had become a confirmed Christian, the Prince presented me with a solid gold cross, and a chain of the same metal to suspend it around my neck by, in the prevailing Russian fashion; and, as he had never allowed me to associate with the rest of his domestics, I began to consider myself quite a superior being. (79-80)

Said's description of his conversion suggests that he was forced by Prince Troubetzkoÿ. Patrick Horn in his article "Coercions, Conversions, Subversions: The Nineteenth-Century Slave Narratives of Omar ibn Said, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, and Nicholas Said" argues that Said's conversion is questionable.¹⁰⁴ Chapter 12 concerns his educational development in different European languages and comments on European cities, such as Rome.

The last chapter of the *Autobiography*, Chapter 13, "In London, Paris and The West Indies," has themes of self-improvement and social advancement, continuing with description of some European cities. It also conveys Said's strong desire to return back to Africa. This time Said does not listen to his master when the latter attempts to prevent him. As Said states: "[a]ll the Prince could do was to draw a promise from me to return to him after spending a year in Central Africa" (101). However, Said's meeting with Mr. Rochussen, leads to a new rising action. Said describes places that he visited with Mr. and Mrs. Rochussen. In the West Indies, Said saw free Africans and "admired the exploits of Toussaint, [sic] L'Ouverture, Dessalines, Christophe, and other negro leaders, whose heroism and military talent are an honor to the African race" (104). Here is another example of Said's *Autobiography* reversing stereotypes against Africans. Precious Rasheeda

¹⁰⁴ See also Muhammad (xvi), Dabovic ("Out" 63) and Horn (60).

Muhammad states in her introduction to Said's *Autobiography* that he "gives us an insight into the truth about the productivity and intelligence of the African and makes a strong case against the idea that Africa is ignorant" (xiv). Similarly, Horn comments that Said's *Autobiography* "raises intriguing questions about the extent of agency and resistance that enslaved Africans (and African Americans) were able to achieve. By the act of writing his life, Said exerted a form of self-mastery over his past, even though he had spent much of it in servitude of one form or another" (61). He criticizes racism in Haiti (105). Said states:

The prejudice of color in the West Indies between the negro and the hybrid mulatto is much greater than exists in the United States.

It is a burning shame that instead of making that country prosperous and its people industrious and happy, the *soidisant*, aristocrats and educated people of Hayti should pay attention to mean and low party dissensions.

No wonder the whites of different countries maintain that the negro is incapable of self-government. (105)

Said's criticism of racism in Haiti is, possibly, a warning to African Americans and Americans in general, from the issue of racism by presenting the example of Haiti. However, Said comments that "the Southern white has ten-fold more humane feeling towards the black man than the West India mulatto" (105). He was in the South when he published his autobiography and possibly he did not want to cause a problem with his Southern friends. Said writes, "I am proud to say that I have gained the esteem of numerous white friends in Charleston, among which are Messrs. General Simmons,

Kanapaux, Dr. Ogier, Sim, De Saussure, Chazal, Cohen, and a host of others who have shown me a great deal of favor” (110). Muhammad believes that Said’s time in the South is an obvious reason why Said did not mention his involvement in the Civil War in the *Autobiography* (xvi).

Said travelled to New York and then to Canada. In Canada, Said loaned Mr. Rochussen 300 pounds. However, Mr. Rochussen and his wife ran away leaving Said in the hotel to pay 2000 dollars. The hotel seized Said’s properties, “consisting of four Turkish *costumes*, three full suits, of broadcloth, a dozen of linen and fine English flannel shirts, etc. etc., worth more than two hundred and fifty dollars” (108). The Rochussen’s betrayal of Said is the climax of the *Autobiography* as a travel narrative. Said comments “[h]aving no trade, knowing no person to whom I could apply for help, --I was truly in a pitiful situation. But God who never forsakes us came to my relief” (108).

Said left Canada for the United States. He participated in the Civil War through his enrollment in the Union army. However, he did not mention that in his autobiographical article “A Native of Bornoo” or in his *Autobiography*. In fact, Said is not consistent with dates in the *Autobiography*. Muhammad states that Said “conveniently skips over ten years of history, pushing forward the actual date of his arrival in the States to after the Civil War” (xvi). She suggests one of the reasons is that Said was in the South and he had been warned about the “Ku Klux Klan members, [and] a South that sent Black people to see if he was a Yankee spy” (xvi). After the Civil War, Said contributed with other African Americans to community advancement through working as a French language teacher in the South and a lecturer.

Said decided to travel to raise subscriptions to publish his autobiography. He was advised by African Americans to not go to Alabama, where “the freedmen . . . did not know what freedom was owing to the oppression of the whites under which they were situated” (111), thus to being at risk of losing his life by the hands of the Ku Klux Klan group. However, Said presents his unique personality in rejecting the advice that he had been given by stating that “there were good and bad in all countries” (112). In his travel, “Blacks were sent at times to pick me, but I had nothing to tell them excepting that I travelled for my own amusement and gratification, at the same time, making a little something which I hoped would enable me to publish my Adventures” (112). Regarding Said’s personality, Safet Dabovic states that Said “presents a model of self-empowerment that draws as much from African-American leaders like Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown as it does from African Muslim leaders like El-Kanemy and Barca Garna” (“Displacement” 185).

In Colombia, Said received a good treatment by Mr. M. Smith and a letter that indicates Said’s good personal character. This letter helps Said to gain a position as a teacher in Abbeville. In 1872, Said opened his own school and his aim for establishing his school was not only as a source of income, but also as an involvement in social advancement in the South during the Reconstruction Era. Said’s last paragraphs in Chapter 13 conveys his position:

My honest and ardent desire is to render myself useful to my race wherever it may be. I have no aspirations for fame, nor anything of the sort. But I shall always prefer at all times to find myself in the

midst of the most ignorant of my race, and endeavor to teach the rising generation the advantages of education.

Self-denial is now-a-days so rare, that it is thought only individuals of insane mind can speak of it. A person who tries to live only for others, and puts himself in the second place, is hooted at, and considered a fit inmate for the asylum.

The man who artfully extorts the earning of his fellow-man, and who seems to have no feeling for his daily wants, is, by a strange perversion, deemed the wise.

To me, it is impossible to conceive how a human being can be happy through any other channel, than to do as much good as possible to his fellow-man in this world. (115-116)

Said realizes the connection between literacy and true freedom from slavery, where physical freedom is not enough without liberating minds with education.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, Said's words reinforce Andrews's critical statement in describing the postbellum African American narrators "as stewards of the welfare of a larger group" ("Slave" 223). Generally, Chapter 13 presents Said's political perspectives in Haiti and then South America and also his involvement in social changes.

Said's Supplementary Chapter is about "Bladen Springs." He wrote this chapter at a request by several gentlemen, presumably African Americans. Said's purpose for that chapter was "that suffering humanity may, through the medium of my autobiography, hear of its fame and be benefited thereby" (117). Before

¹⁰⁵ See also Dabovic ("Displacement" 216).

describing the benefits of Bladen water, Said gives his feedback about educating African Americans. He “always found colored children very apt, in the South” (117). His comment indicates, to the end of the narrative, that his race is not ignorant.

Said describes medical virtues of Bladen Springs along with providing details of mineral analysis of the water. This part provides information concerning health awareness and medical benefits of using vapor and steam baths. He lists different diseases that Bladen water helps in “restoring all the organs to their natural functions” (119). Arguably, Said wrote this chapter as part of his role as an American intellectual activist. According to Said’s “A Native of Bornoo,” he joined the “hospital department, to acquire some knowledge of medicine” while his was participating in the Civil War (qtd. in Austin, *Sourcebook* 679). Austin comments that Said enrolled in the health sector because of “a desire someday to educate his native countrymen in the ‘sciences of the West’ . . . At the same time, he may have been attempting also to do something about the inadequate medical attention . . . African American[s] . . . received” (Austin, *Sourcebook* 656). Generally, this reflects Said’s desire of self-improvement and educating and advancing his community, as he writes: “I appreciate . . . [, “the elevation of my race”,] above all things in this world” (122).

The last part of the Supplementary Chapter presents information concerning the progress of his autobiography’s publication. Said praises Rev. A. J. Witherspoon for his good character and help in publishing the *Autobiography*. Said says:

my admiration for him [Rev. A. J. Witherspoon] is intensified when I find him entirely divested of that plague of humanity, *prejudice of color*, or rather of condition. Prejudice hardens the heart, beclouds the

judgment, prejudice exposes and magnifies the faults, and overlooks and covers up the virtues of a fellow creature. (122)

Said's admiration of Rev. A. J. Witherspoon reflects a socio-political issue in the Reconstruction Era, which is racism. This suggests that to Said, racism is a problem that the United States faces in reconstruction. As Andrews remarks that postbellum slave narratives "generally take a skeptical view of white America's commitment to freedom and equality" ("Slave" 228).

The *Autobiography* is in a simple chronological order, but Said incorporates his knowledge from different cultures in narrating his autobiography. For instance, before going to school in Africa, Said states that he along with his classmates "could repeat a great number of prayers, but like many Roman Catholics, who daily say 'Pater Noster' and 'Ave Maria,' we did not understand the meaning of one word" (20). Also, his narrative is informative through linking science and art that are related to the places that he visited. For example, regarding science, Said mentions in his narrative Harvey "Circulation of the blood" when he visited England (99). Said's narrative has phrases of other languages due to the fact that he spoke nine languages. As he states that "[p]ure English can hardly be expected from one who has to choose his words and phrases" among other eight different languages that he speaks (2). Thus, the *Autobiography* presents and reflects the roots of multilingualism in American literary history.

Said refers to his narrative as biography, autobiography and also as adventure narrative. However, he titled it as autobiography. Calling his narrative a biography rather than autobiography suggests that Said might be influenced by the concept of *sira*, an Islamic biographical writing. Dwight Reynolds claims that the concept of

sira integrates the two genres of biography and autobiography (39-40). Said might be influenced by the concept of *sira*. The *Autobiography*, as the above discussion shows, has elements of the slave narrative and the travel narrative. Dabovic believes that Said “constructs an innovative narrative that straddles the line between travelogue and slave narrative” (“Displacement” 15). Considering the *Autobiography*’s plot as slave narrative, Chapter 1 and the first part of Chapter 2 are the exposition of the narrative. From the second part of Chapter 2 to Chapter 9 are the rising actions that lead to Said’s enslavement and his life as an enslaved person. Chapter 10 is the climax when Said gained his freedom in Russia. The rest of the chapters can be considered as the falling action of the narrative’s plot.

However, scholars, such as Austin and Marfo, believe that Said does not present the theme of slavery at center of in his narrative. Austin claims regarding Said’s “A Native of Bornoo” that “[s]lavery is . . . a subject omitted in the autobiography” (*Transatlantic* 184). Similarly, Marfo comments on Said’s *Autobiography*:

The reader is left with the impression that under enslavement, Said enjoyed a life akin to if not better than that of an untitled freeman. In this and other early Muslim narratives, therefore, if there is a moral question at stake it is the plight of the individual narrator. By contrast, early narratives by non-Muslims tend to have a characteristic fundamental to the slave narrative genre, whereby slaves born in America, such as John Marrant, or non-Muslim African-born slaves, such as Gronniosaw, challenge the system of slavery. (1216)

An interpretation of Said's relegation of the subject of slavery is that he does not want to talk about slavery in a society that had abolished it recently. Even though Said seems to be satisfied with his life as an enslaved person, as Muhammad remarks, "nothing could have compared to the safety and peace of being at home in the presence of those who loved him and in complete control of his destiny as much as 'Providence' would allow" (xv). Indeed, Said frequently presents his desire to return to his home throughout the narrative. Generally, the theme of slavery is not the main theme in the postbellum slave narratives.

The descriptions and information that Said provides in his *Autobiography*, suggests that it is a travel narrative. As has been mentioned in Chapter 2, Said's possibly was influenced by Al-Idrisi's travel narrative in writing his travels. Dabovic claims that "travel writing allowed African-Americans to enter a privileged mobile social space and to access new modes of being" ("Displacement" 187). So, Said by using the form of a travel narrative, achieves his purpose of writing his *Autobiography*, which is indicating that Africans are able to be self-made men and make a social improvement. His desire to advance social changes in the South marks Said's *Autobiography* as different from many postbellum narrators. For instance, his movement was from the North to the South, unlike "narratives of the lives of former slaves followed the migration patterns of black southerners seeking opportunity in the upper Mississippi Valley, the mid-Atlantic states, the Midwest, and far West" in late nineteenth century, as Andrews states ("Slave" 220). Similarly, Horn claims that "Said's unconventional slave narrative, therefore, concludes with a voluntary, paid passage across the Atlantic, followed by a decision to move from North to South after the Civil War, inverting the archetypal tropes of both the Middle Passage and the Great Migration" (61).

Situating Said's *Autobiography* in Robert Stepto's categorization of narrations within slave narratives, it belongs to the two types, the generic narrative and the authenticating narrative. Said's *Autobiography* as a slave narrative authenticates itself rather than depending on white people's documents to validate it. Thus, it fits in with Stepto's generic narrative. Considering it as a travel narrative, the *Autobiography* is an authenticating narrative, in which the enslavement tale is used as an authenticating document for other genres.

5.3 Conclusion: Positioning Said's *Autobiography* in the American Canon

Three years before the rediscovery of Said's *Autobiography*, Allan Austin states in *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* "[t]hat Nicholas Said was not prevailed upon to produce a full-length book is a serious loss to mid-nineteenth-century comparative history" (174). Said's *Autobiography* was rediscovered in 2000, but it has not been discussed among postbellum slave narratives or included in the American literary canon.

Said's travels and contacts with different cultures where he played different roles, as enslaved person, a servant, a teacher, and an activist, made Said, as Dabovic describes him, "a world citizen" ("Out" 62). His travels ended in a multicultural country, where he tried to defend the humanity, challenge Western stereotypes and acknowledge his race's intellectuality. Said was like Douglass as a political activist. He was involved in "an important black political movement that sought to build schools and to promote racial equality through political empowerment" (Dabovic, "Displacement" 226). His *Autobiography* reflects political and social issues; and stories about the South during the Reconstruction Era. As Muhamad Al-Ahari states that Said's *Autobiography* "should be an assigned text in the African-American or

American-Literature classes since not only does Nicolas [Said] provide an explored view of being a Muslim (and later a Swedenborgist) on five continents, but he can also speak of comparative economic and race relations with authority covering five continents, but he can also speak of comparative economic and race relations with authority” (32-33). Said’s narrative is rich of cultural, historical, and literary information that reflect the complexity of the study of slave narrative. The inclusion of Said’s *Autobiography* is an indication of multicultural roots in American literary history. Said’s narrative consists of characteristics of the slave narrative and also the travel narrative, which suggests the writings by enslaved African American Muslims, in general, should not only be discussed in the study of the slave narrative genre, but as a vital element of the American literary canon in general.

Conclusion

Narratives by enslaved African American Muslims cover the three periods of slave narrative, pre-antebellum, antebellum, and postbellum. These narratives add depth to African American studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in particular of the slave narrative genre. Along with scholars, such as Safet Dabovic and Florence Marfo, the present study argues that even though these narratives differ in many ways from non-Muslim African American slave narratives, they share important characteristics with their anthologized counterparts. “Situating African American Muslim Slave Narratives in American Literature” argues that the distinguishing characteristics of these writings of African American Muslims should not lead to their exclusion from the American literary canon, but rather to their inclusion. Inclusion will enhance the canon and diversify the study of African American slave narrative due to unique linguistic, cultural and literary features of the respective narratives.

All the selected narratives by African American Muslims start with background information about their hometowns since all of them were African-born. Most of the texts convey the noble savage idea and challenge Enlightenment stereotypes concerning Africans. The enslaved Muslims had different motivations for writing these narratives: some, such as Omar and Abdr-Rahman, wrote at the request of white abolitionists and others, like Mahommah and Said, allegedly by their own choice. Their literacy (in Arabic as well as African tribal languages) prior to their enslavements attracted the attention and interest of American societies, which wanted to involve them in missionary purposes. Their writings are influenced by texts and literary genres that they had studied in their homeland, in particular Quranic verses.

Sarah Meer in her essay “Slave Narrative as Literature,” claims that “one important indicator of the slave narratives’ sense of their own place in the world of letters lies in their intertextuality, their insistence on making reference to other texts” (74). The narratives analyzed throughout the present study present numerous intertextual references. The narratives also present different attitudes toward their authors’ enslavements. The religious element marks an important feature in their narratives. Their religious and cultural identity provides interpretations of the absence of the Middle Passage horror and direct anti-slavery themes, in most of the narratives. African American Muslim slave narratives are not easily compartmentalized into Robert Stepto’s three categories of African American narratives. Their addition to the canon would undoubtedly enrich and expand our current understanding of African American narratives and their literary development and creativity.

Based on a theoretical discussion of canonization, as well as genre clarifications, the individual chapters of the present study focus on representatives of the three main periods of slave narrative, pre-antebellum, antebellum, and postbellum. To this end, Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of including Ayyub ben Suleiman’s testimony in the American literary canon due to its characteristics that broaden the pre-antebellum slave narrative. The comparison in Chapter 4 between Douglass’s *Narrative* and the texts of Abdr-Rahman Ibrahim, Omar ibn Said and Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua presents different perspectives of the antebellum slave narratives. These perspectives are literary, social, historical and political, which illustrate an important part of the diversity of antebellum slave narratives. The analysis of Mohammad Ali ben Said’s (Nicholas Said) *Autobiography* in Chapter 5 clearly presents the focal function of postbellum slave

narratives, which is social and community advancement, during the Reconstruction Era.

Some scholars may criticize including enslaved African American Muslim slave narratives in the American literary canon for reasons concerning their brevity and the small number of the narrators compared to the book-length slave narratives and the large number texts by non-Muslim African American slave narrators. There are three main reasons for countering this claim. Firstly, these are just representative examples of enslaved Muslim narrators. There may be other narratives by enslaved African American Muslims, which have not been rediscovered yet. As mentioned before, the original Omar's *Life* was rediscovered in 1995, whereas Nicholas Said's *Autobiography* was only rediscovered in 2000. Also, the large number of enslaved African Muslims in the Americas suggests the possibility that there are more manuscripts. In support of this assumption, Robin Law in his article "Individualising the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua of Djougou (1854)" states that:

On an impressionistic count, maybe almost a half of the African-born slaves and ex-slaves whose biographies were recorded were Muslims; and this too was certainly a very much higher proportion than Muslims represented among the entire enslaved population. The reason for this disproportionate visibility of Muslims is unclear; but it may be that the literacy of Muslims (in Arabic) was likely to attract the attention and patronage of slave-owners and other Europeans, and thus improve their chances both of obtaining freedom and of access to opportunities for literary production. (120)

Secondly, enslaved African Americans might have been forcibly or voluntarily Christianized, which suggests that some of their birth names had been changed and their identity became indistinct. All but one of the narrators discussed in this study gained new names. In support of this argument, Khaled A. Beydoun argues in his essay “Antebellum Islam” (2014) “[t]he absence of Muslim slaves from legal scholarship is a consequence of the legal segregation of Black and Muslim identity during the Antebellum Era” (5). Beydoun adds that the “law remade Africans into Black slaves, and slave codes criminalized religious activity and the public assertion of religious identity” (6). Earlier, Michael Gomez in his article “Muslims in Early America” (1994) declares that:

One of the belief systems introduced into the Americas by Africans was Islam. However, the dawn of Islam in the Americas and its association with Africans have yet to receive the scholarly attention that is merited. This is particularly true of North American historical studies, in which one rarely reads of the early existence of Islam in what would become the United States. Such neglect is most regrettable, given the possibility that one of America’s most illustrious sons, Frederick Douglass, may have himself been a descendant of Muslims. (671)

More generally, including voices of enslaved African Muslims provides a more diverse and more accurate picture of slave narrative. It adds important elements to the previously limited characteristics of slave narrative as a genre. The inclusion of the narratives that are the subject of the present study in mainstream American literature acknowledges “the multiethnic and multilingual roots of American

literature” (Horn 48). As shown in this study, the American literary canon has much to gain from inclusion of these slave narratives by African American Muslims. These writers help provide a more accurate view of the African American legacy, its literary development, diverse religious experiences, and the flight from enslavement to freedom.

References

- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.
- Afroz, Sultana. "Islam and Slavery Through the Ages: Slave Sultans and Slave Mujahids." *Journal of Islamic Law & Culture* vol, 5, no. 2, 2000, pp. 97–123.
- Al-Ahari, Muhammad A., editor. *Five Classic Muslim Slave Narratives*. Magribine, 2006.
- Al-Ansari, Fadhel. العبودية: الرق والمرأة بين الإسلام الرسولي والإسلام التاريخي [Slavery: Slavery and Women between Prophetic and Historic Islam]. Al Ahali, 2001.
- Al-Bukhari, Imam. *The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih Al Bukari: Arabic-English*. Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, 8 vols, Darussalam, 1997.
- Alford, Terry. *Prince Among Slaves*. 30th anniversary ed., Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Al-Jazaeri, Abi Baker. منهاج المسلم: كتاب عقائد وآداب وأخلاق وعبادات ومعاملات [The Muslim's Method: Book of Creeds, Manners, Behaviors, Worships, and Dealings]. Al Assrya Bookshop, 2005.
- Aljoe, Nicole. Introduction. *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas*, edited by Aljoe and Ian Frederick Finseth, University of Virginia, 2014, pp. 1-16.
- Allison, Robert. "The United States and Barbary Coast Slavery." *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*, edited by Ala Alryess, University of Wisconsin, 2011, pp. 152-61.
- Al-Marzouqi, Hassan. Personal interview. 10 Jun. 2014.
- Alryyes, Ala A., editor. *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*. University of Wisconsin, 2011.
- Al-Shalabi, Nazmi, et al. "The American Literary Canon: Impervious to Change?." *International Forum of Teaching and Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2011, pp. 50-55.
- Al-Trmanini, Abdel Asalam. الرق: ماضيه وحاضره [Slavery: Its Past and Present]. 2nd ed., Al Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Art and Literature, 1985.
- Andrews, William. Introduction. *Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass*, edited by Andrews, G.K. Hall, 1991, pp. 1-17.
- , editor. *Slave Narratives After Slavery*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

- . "Slave Narrative, 1865-1900." *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, Edited by John Ernest, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 219–232.
- . *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*. University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Austin, Allan D., editor. *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook*, Garland, 1984.
- . *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles*. Routledge, 1997.
- Barksdale, Richard K., and Keneth Kinnamon. *Black Writers of America; a Comprehensive Anthology*. Macmillan Publishing Company, 1972.
- Beydoun, Khaled A. "Antebellum Islam." *Howard Law Journal*, vol. 58, no. 1, 2014. pp. 141-193, [dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2536258](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2536258). Accessed 3 Mar. 2015.
- Bland, Starling L. Introduction. *African American Slave Narratives: An Anthology*, edited by Bland, vol. 1, Greenwood Press, 2001, pp. 1-22.
- , editor. *Understanding 19th-Century Slave Narratives*. Greenwood, 2016.
- Blassingame, John. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. Harcourt Brace, 1994.
- Blumenthal, Rachel A. "Canonicity, Genre, and the Politics of Editing: How We Read Frederick Douglass." *Callaloo*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2013, pp. 178-90, search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uaeu.ac.ae/docview/1419399838?accountid=62373. Accessed 21 Mar. 2016.
- Bona, Mary Jo, and Irma Maini. Introduction. *Multiethnic Literature and Canon Debates*, edited by Bona and Maini, State University of New York, 2006, pp. 1-20.
- Bontemps, Arna. *Great Slave Narratives*. Beacon Press, 1969.
- Butterfield, Stephen. *Black Autobiography in America*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1974.
- Cain, William. "Opening the American Mind: Reflection on the 'Canon' Controversy." *Canon vs. Culture: Reflection on the Current Debate*, edited by Jan Gorak, Garland, 2001, pp. 3-16.

- Carretta, Vincent. "Back to the Future: Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Black Authors." *A Companion to African American Literature*, edited by Gene Andrew Jarrett, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 11-24.
- . "Early African-American Literature?." *Beyond Douglass: New Perspectives on Early African-American Literature*, edited by Michael J. Drexler and Ed White, Bucknell University Press, 2008, pp. 91-106.
- Carretta, Vincent, and Philip Gould. Introduction. *Genius in Bondage: Literature of Early Black Atlantic*, edited by Carretta and Gould, The University Press of Kentucky, 2001, pp. 1-13.
- Clarence-Smith, William. *Islam and The Abolition of Slavery*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Couser, G. *Memoir: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Csicsila, Joseph. *Canons by Consensus: Critical Trends and American Literature Anthologies*. The University of Alabama Press, 2004.
- Curtin, Philip D. *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1967.
- D'haen, Theo. "Working the American Canon: Reflections of a European Canon-Watcher." *Rewriting the Dream: Reflections on the Changing American Literary Canon*, edited by W. M. Verhoeven. Rodopi, 1992, pp. 233- 244.
- Dabovic, Safet. "Displacement and the Negotiation of an American Identity in African Muslim Slave Narratives." Dissertation, Stony Brook University, 2009. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uaeu.ac.ae/docview/305093896?accountid=62373.
- . "'Out of Place': The Travels of Nicholas Said." *Criticism*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2012, pp. 59-83, search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uaeu.ac.ae/docview/920389351?pq-origsite=summon, Accessed 2 Nov. 2012.
- Davis, Charles, and Henry Louis Gates, editors. *The Slave's Narrative*. Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Diouf, Sylviane. "'God Does Not Allow Kings to Enslave Their People': Islamic Reformists and the Transatlantic Slave Trade." *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*, edited by Ala Alryyes, University of Wisconsin, 2011, pp. 162-181.
- . *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. 15th anniversary ed., New York University Press, 2013.

- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Edited by Robert Stepto, Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Einboden, Jeffrey. *Arabic Slave Writings and the American Canon*. Northern Illinois University, www.niu.edu/arabicslavewritings/index.shtml. Accessed 15 Mar. 2014.
- . *The Islamic Lineage of American Literary Culture: Muslim Sources from the Revolution to Reconstruction*. Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Ernest, John, editor. *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Fisch, Audrey A., editor. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Fisher, Humphrey J. *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa*. Hurst & Company, 2001.
- Fodor, Pál. Introduction. *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders: Early Fifteenth-early Eighteenth Centuries. The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage: Politics, Society and Economy*, edited by Géza Dávid and Fodor. vol. 37, Brill, 2007, pp. xi-xx.
- Foster, Frances Smith. *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives*. 2nd ed., University of Wisconsin, 1994.
- Gardner, Eric. *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-century African American Literature*. University of Mississippi, 2009.
- Gates, Henry Louis. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "racial" Self*. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- . *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- . *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Gates, Henry, and Nellie McKay, editors. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Norton, 1997.
- Gomez, Michael A. *Black Crescent: African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- . "Muslims in Early America." *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 60, no. 4, Nov. 1994, pp. 671-710, www.jstor.org/stable/2211064. Accessed 22 Oct. 2012.

- Gorak, Jan. *The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Literary Idea*. 2nd ed., Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Gould, Philip. "Early Black Atlantic Writing and the Cultures of Enlightenment." *Beyond Douglass: New Perspectives on Early African-American Literature*, edited by Michael J. Drexler and Ed White, Bucknell University Press, 2008, pp. 107-122.
- . "The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, edited by Audrey A. Fisch, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 11-27.
- Grant, Douglas. *The Fortunate Slave: An Illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Green, Keith. "Uncommon Sufferings: Rethinking Bondage in *A Narrative of the Uncommon, and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man*." *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas*, edited by Nicole N. Aljoe and Ian Frederick Finseth, U of Virginia, 2014, pp. 101-126.
- Gronniosaw, James. *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as Related by Himself. Slave Narratives*. Edited by William Andrews and Henry Gates, 2nd ed., Library of America, 2000, pp.1-34.
- Gurley, Ralph. "Secretary's Report." *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*, edited by Ala Alryess, University of Wisconsin, 2011, pp. 213-220.
- Harris, Will. "Phillis Wheatley: A Muslim Connection." *African American Review*, vol. 48, no. 1-2, Spring/Summer 2015, pp. 1-15.
search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uaeu.ac.ae/docview/1700483349?accountid=62373. Accessed 20 Aug. 2015.
- Hassan, Wail S. *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Heglar, Charles J. *Rethinking the Slave Narrative: Slave Marriage and the Narratives of Henry Bibb and William and Ellen Craft*. Greenwood, 2001.
- Hemenway, Robert. "In the American Canon." *Redefining American Literary History*, edited by V. La Vonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, Modern Language Association of America, 1990, pp. 62-72.
- Horn, Patrick. "Coercions, Conversions, Subversions: The Nineteenth-Century Slave Narratives of Omar Ibn Said, Mahommah Gordo Baquaqua, and Nicholas Said." *Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2012, pp. 55-66,
dx.doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2012.10815370. Accessed 15 Nov. 2014.

- Hudson-Weems, Clenora. "The African American Literary Tradition." *The African American Experience: An Historiographical and Bibliographical Guide*, Edited by Arvarh E. Strickland and Robert E. Weems, Greenwood Press, 2001, pp. 116–143.
- Hunwick, John. "'I Wish to Be Seen in Our Land Called Āfrikā': Umar B. Sayyid's Appeal to Be Released from Slavery (1819)." *Journal of Arabic & Islamic Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2003, pp. 62-77, www.lancaster.ac.uk/jais/volume/docs/vol5/5_hunwick.pdf.
- Ibn Said, Omar. "The Life of Omar Ibn Said, Witten by Himself." Translated by Ala A. Alryyes, *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*. Edited by Ala A. Alryyes, University of Wisconsin, 2011.
- Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language: A Summarized Version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir with Comments from Sahih Al-Bukhari*. Translated by Muhammad M. Khan and Muhammed T. Al-Hilali. 7th ed., Darussalam, 1997.
- Judy, Ronald. *(Dis)forming the American Canon: African-Arab Slave Narratives and the Vernacular*. University of Minnesota, 1993.
- Kane, Ousmane. *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*. Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Kolb, Harold. "Defining the Canon." *Redefining American Literary History*, edited by V. La Vonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, Modern Language Association of America, 1990, pp. 35-51.
- Kolbas, E. Dean. *Critical Theory and the Literary Canon*. Westview Press, 2001.
- Kolodny, Annette. "Letting Go our Grand Obsessions: Notes Toward a New Literary History of the American Frontiers." *American Literature*, vol. 64, no. 1, Mar. 1992, pp. 1-18, www.jstor.org/stable/2927486. Accessed 31 Aug. 2015.
- . "The Integrity of Memory: Creating a New Literary History of the United States." *American Literature*, vol. 57, no. 2, May 1985, pp. 291-307, www.jstor.org/stable/2926068. Accessed 15 Aug. 2015.
- Krupat, Arnold. *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*. University of California Press, 1989.
- Langley, April C. E. *The Black Aesthetic Unbound: Theorizing the Dilemma of Eighteenth-century African American Literature*. Ohio State University Press, 2008.
- . "The Eighteenth-Century Black Wor(l)d and Early Writers's Biblical Literacy." *Beyond Douglass: New Perspectives on Early African-American Literature*,

edited by Michael J. Drexler and Ed White, Bucknell University Press, 2008, pp. 55-68.

Lauter, Paul. *Canon and Context*. Oxford University Press, 1991.

---. Preface. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, edited by Lauter, vol. 1, D.C. Heath and Company, 1990, pp. xxxiii-xliii.

---. Preface. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, edited by Lauter, 2nd ed., vol. 1, D.C. Heath and Company, 1994, pp xli-xlii.

---. Preface. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, edited by Lauter, 3rd ed., vol. 1, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998, pp. xlv-xlvi.

Law, Robin. "Individualising the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua of Djougou (1854)." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 12, Dec. 2002, pp. 113-140, journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S008044010200004X. Accessed 25 Apr. 2014.

Law, Robin, and Paul E. Lovejoy. Introduction. *The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America*, edited by Law and Lovejoy, 2nd ed., Markus Wiener, 2007, pp. 1-84.

Lee, Maurice S. Introduction. *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, edited by Lee. Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 1-12.

Lepore, Jill. *A is for American: Letters and Other Characters in the Newly United States*. Knopf, 2002.

Lovejoy, Paul E. "Freedom Narratives' of Transatlantic Slavery." *Slavery & Abolition*, vol. 32, no.1, 2011, pp. 91-107, content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?T=P&P=AN&K=58124915&S=R&D=a9h&EbscoContent=dGJyMNLe80SeprM4yNfsOLCmr0%2Bep69SsKu4SrKWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMPGqtU%2BwrbBOuePfgeyx44Dt6fIA. Accessed 4 Oct. 2012.

---. "Slavery, the Bilad Al-Sudan, and the Frontiers of the African Diaspora." *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, edited by Lovejoy. Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004, pp. 1-29.

---. *Transformations in Slavery: A History in Slavery in Africa*. 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 2000.

M'Baye, Babacar. *The Trickster Comes West: Pan-African Influence in Early Black Diasporan Narratives*. University Press of Mississippi, 2009.

- Manna, Hashim S. خطبة الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم في حجة الوداع: تخريج ودراسة وإعراب وتحليل [The Sermon of the Messenger - Peace Be Upon Him- in the Farewell Pilgrimage: (Exegesis, Study, Parsing, Analysis and Translation into English) and Other Sermons of the Messenger - Peace Be Upon Him]. 2nd ed., Darr Al-Fikir Al-Arabi, 2001.
- Marfo, Florence. "African Muslims in African American Literature." *Callaloo*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2009, pp. 1213-1222, www.jstor.org/stable/27743138. Accessed 20 Mar. 2012.
- Marr, Timothy. "'Out of This World': Islamic Irruptions in the Literary Americas." *American Literary History*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2006, pp. 521-49, muse.jhu.edu/journals/alh/summary/v018/18.3marr.html. Accessed 22 Oct. 2012.
- Meer, Sarah. "Slave Narratives as Literature." *The Cambridge Companion to Slavery in American Literature*, Edited by Ezra F. Tawil, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 70-85.
- Mooij, J. "The Canonizers and Canonized." *Rewriting the Dream: Reflections on the Changing American Literary Canon*, edited by W. M. Verhoeven, Rodopi, 1992, pp. 245-257.
- Muhammad, Precious Rasheeda. Introduction. *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said: a Native of Bornou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa*, by Nicholas Said, 1873, Journal of Islam in America, 2000, pp. ix-xx.
- Munns, Jessica. "Canon Fodder: Women's Studies and the (British) Literary Canon." *Canon vs. Culture: Reflection on the Current Debate*, edited by Jan Gorak, Garland, 2001, pp. 17-28.
- Muslim, Imam. *The Translation of the Meaning of the Summarized Sahih Muslim: Arabic-English*. Compiled by Hafiz Z. Al-Mundhiri, 2 vols, Darussalam, 2000.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S., editor. Preface. *African American Authors, 1745-1945: Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, Greenwood Press, 2000, pp. xiii-xvi.
- Northup, Solomon. *Twelve Years a Slave*. Edited by David Wilson, 1853. The University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Olney, James. "'I Was Born': Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature." *Callaloo*, no. 20, 1984, pp. 46-73, www.jstor.org/stable/2930678. Accessed 26 Dec. 2013.
- Osman, Ghada, and Camille Forbes. "Representing the West in the Arabic Language: The Slave Narrative of Omar Ibn Said." *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 15,

no. 3, 2004, pp. 331-43, jis-oxfordjournals-org.ezproxy.uaeu.ac.ae/content/15/3/331. Accessed 13 May 2012.

Rak, Julie. "Are Memoirs Autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity." *Genre*, vol. 37, no. 3-4, Jan. 2004, pp. 483-504, www.academia.edu/2381597/Are_Memoirs_Autobiography_A_Consideration_of_Genre_and_Public_Identity. Accessed 20 Oct. 2016.

Ramazani, Jahan. *A Transnational Poetics*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Reynolds, Dwight F., editor. *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*. University of California, 2001.

Ross, Trevor Thornton. *The Making of the English Literary Canon: From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.

Ruoff, V. La Vonne Brown, and Jerry W. Ward, Jr. Introduction. *Redefining American Literary History*, edited by Ruoff and Ward, Modern Language Association of America, 1990, pp. 1-5.

Said, Nicholas. *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said: A Native of Bornou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa*. Edited by Precious Rasheeda Muhammad, Journal of Islam in America, 2000.

Shaheen, Basima. "Literary Form and Islamic Identity in *The Life of Omar Ibn Said*." *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas*, edited by Nicole N. Aljoe and Ian Frederick Finseth, University of Virginia, 2014, pp. 187-208.

Smith, Sidonie. *Where I'm Bound; Patterns of Slavery and Freedom in Black American Autobiography*. Greenwood, 1974.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd ed., University of Minnesota, 2010.

Smith, Valerie. "Neo-Slave Narrative." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, edited by Audrey A. Fisch, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 168-185.

Sollors, Werner. Introduction. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, by Olaudah Equiano, 1789, Norton, 2001, pp. ix-xxxi.

---. Introduction. *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: a Reader of Original Texts with English Translations*, edited by Marc Shell and Sollors, New York University Press, 2000, pp. 1-11.

- Starling, Marion Wilson. *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History*. G.K. Hall and Co., 1981.
- Stepto, Robert B. *From behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*. 2nd ed., University of Illinois, 1991.
- . Introduction. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, by Frederick Douglass, 1845, Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. vii-xxviii.
- Stewart, Charles, and Bruce S. Hall. "The Historic 'Core Curriculum' and the Book Market in Islamic West Africa." *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa*, edited by Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon, Brill, 2011, pp. 109-74.
- Tamplin, William. "Who Was 'Umar ibn Sayyid? A Critical Reevaluation of the Translations and Interpretations of the *Life*." *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, vol. 16, 2016, pp. 125-147, www.lancaster.ac.uk/jais/volume/docs/vol16/v16_04_tamplin_125-147.pdf. Accessed 29 Dec. 2016.
- Tawil, Ezra F., editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Slavery in American Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Translated by Yusuf Ali, Amana Corp., 1983.
- Turkistani, Abdulhafeez Q. "Muslim Slaves and Their Narratives: Religious Faith and Cultural Accommodation." Dissertation, Kent State, 1995. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uaeu.ac.ae/docview/304206853?accountid=62373.
- Valdez, Luis, and Stan Steiner, editors. *Aztlan: an Anthology of Mexican American Literature*. Knopf, 1972.
- Velie, Alan R. *American Indian Literature: an Anthology*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1979.
- Verhoeven, W. M. Introduction. *Rewriting the Dream: Reflections on the Changing American Literary Canon*. Edited by Verhoeven, Rodopi, 1992.
- Waters, Carver Wendell. *Voice in the Slave Narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Solomon Northrup*. Edwin Mellen, 2002.
- Wilson, Charles E., Jr. "The Antebellum Slave Narrative and American Literature." Dissertation, University of Georgia, 1988. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*

Global,

search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uaeu.ac.ae/docview/303671839?accountid=62373.

Zanca, Kenneth J., editor. *American Catholics and Slavery, 1789-1866: An Anthology of Primary Documents*. University Press of America, 1994.

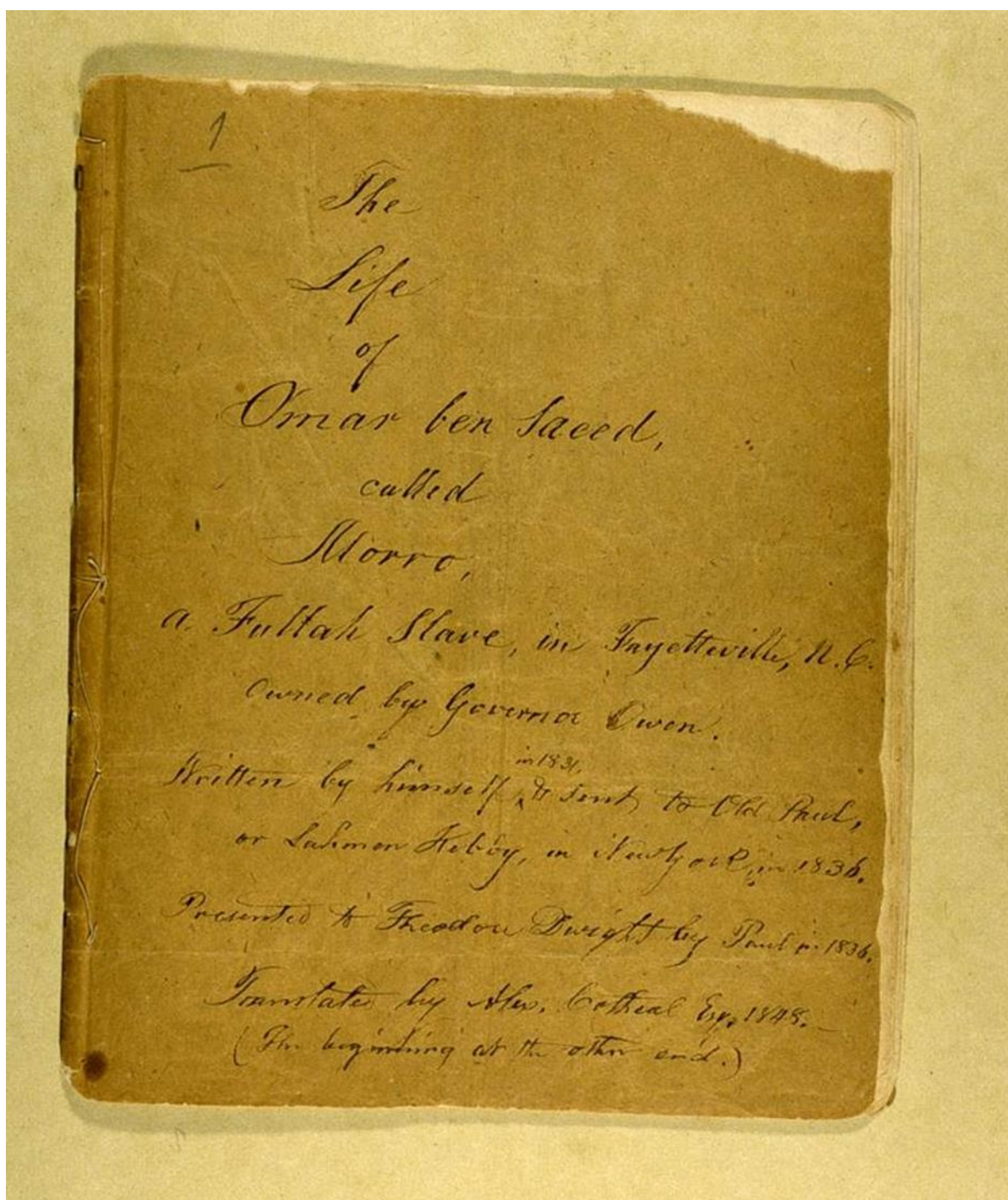
List of Publications

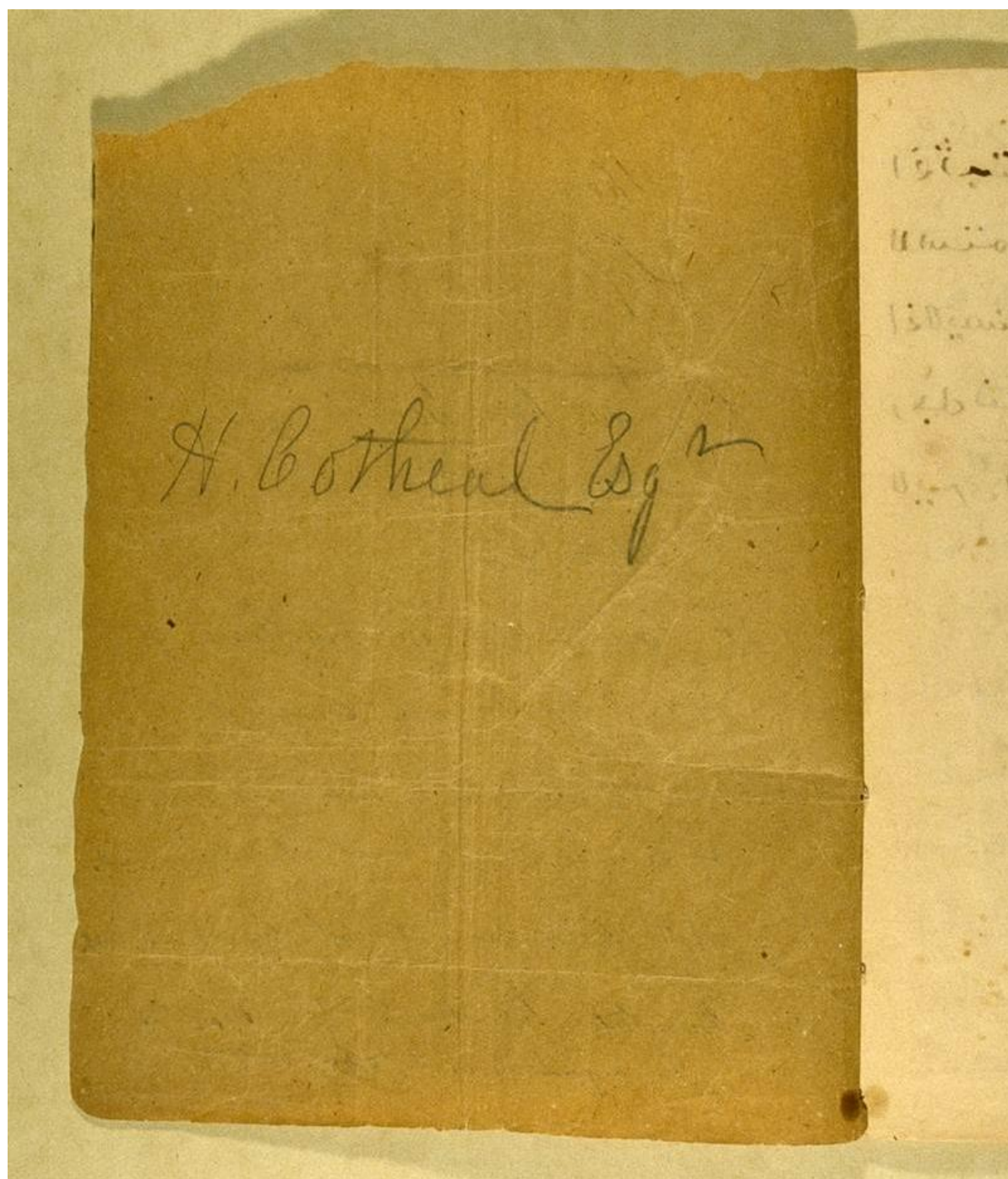
- Al-Badaai, Muna S., "Positioning the Testimony of Job Ben Solomon, An Enslaved African American Muslim." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature IJALEL*, vol. 4, no. 6, 2015, pp. 204-11.
- Al-Badaai, Muna, and Doris Hambuch, "Literary Values of the Slave Narratives by Job Ben Solomon, Omar Ibn Said, and Mahommah Baquaqua." *Horizons in Humanities and Social Sciences Journal*, 2017. [Under Review].

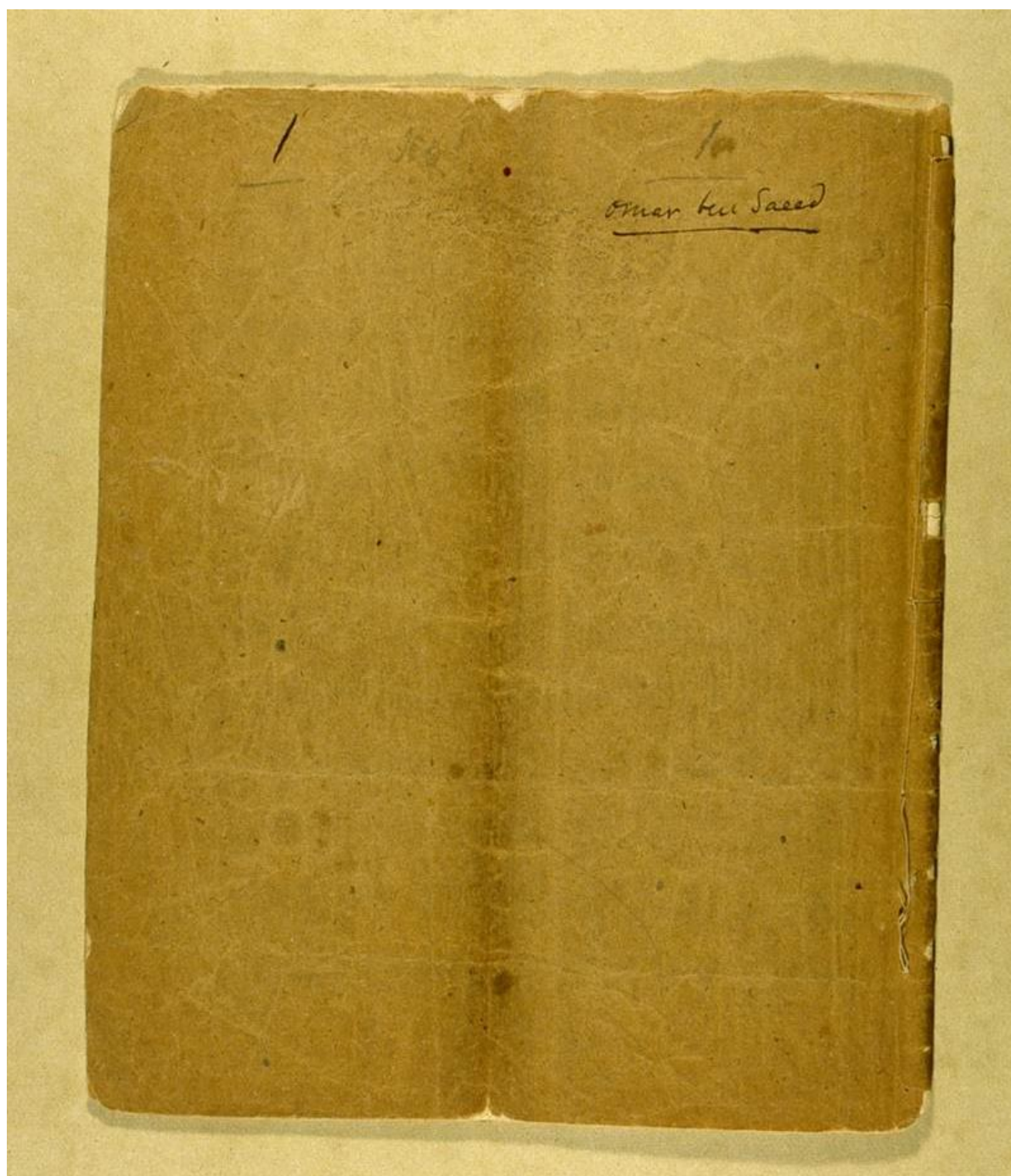
Appendix

I am very grateful to Professor Werner Sollors for providing me a high quality soft copy of Omar Ibn Said's *Life*.

The Life of Omar Ibn Said, Written by Himself (1831)







بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا
 مُحَمَّدٍ تَبَرَّكَ اللَّهُ بِيَدِهِ الْمَلَكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ
 شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. اللَّهُ خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ
 أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ.
 اللَّهُ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ مُبْتَاعًا مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ
 الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَجَاوُزَ جَارِجِ الْبَصَرِ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ
 تَوْرَثٍ مِمَّا رَجَعَ الْبَصَرُ كَيْتَبُ يَنْفُلُكَ إِلَيْكَ
 إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاشِعًا وَهُوَ خَشِيرٌ وَأَفْذَرِي مِنَ
 السَّعْيِ الَّذِي نَبَاهُ صَابِغٌ وَجَعَلْنَا رِجْلَ الْبَصَرِ
 لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَأَعْطَيْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ الشَّجِيرَةِ
 وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ
 الْمَصِيرُ. إِنَّ الْجَوَّاءِ فِيهَا سَمْعُوا صَحْفًا وَهِيَ

(2)
وهي تجوز فتعلم تمييز من الشيخية كلما الفى
بيها سالهم فذ فتعلم السرييا فكم تدير قالوا
بلى فذ جاءنا تدير وكننا فلنا ما نزل الله
من شيء ان انتم الا من تعلم بغير قالوا
لو كنا نسمع او نعقل ما كنا في عند ان الشيخ
والعقروا بذا فيهم ولسنا الا اصحاب الشيخين
ان الذي يتصور ربهم بالغيب لهم مغفرة
وعز كبير واسرورا فولكم واجبروا انه عليه
بذاة الصوة الا يعلم من خلق وهو اللطيف
الخبير هو الذي جعل لكم الاولاد مسوا في منا
كبهما واكلوا من رزقهم اليه تسرون انتم
من والسماء ان تحسب بكم الارض باذاهي

تصور

(3)

يا ايها الذين آمنوا ان منكم من النساء ان يرسل
 عليكم حارسا يستعلمون ما يقولن فليس
 ولعن الذين من قبلهم بآية كان
 لهم انذير اولم يرجعوا الى الله ليرفعهم فاجابوا
 ويقول ما يسئلكم الا الرهن
 انه بكل شيء بصير امن هذا هو رزقكم
 ان امشوا رزقه بل لروا في عتو ونفور اجس
 يمشى مكبرا على وجهه اهتدى امرئ
 يمشى سويا على صراط مستقيم قل هو
 الذي انشاكم وجعل لكم السمع والابصار
 والاوبدة قليلا ما تشكرون قل هو الذي
 انشاكم في الارض واليه ترجعون فيكون

ويقولون متى هذا الوعد ان كنتم صادقين
 قل ان ما العلم عند الله وان ماء اناءه يرمي
 فلما رآه زلفة الشبهة وجوه الذين كبروا وقيل
 ههنا الله كنتم به زفة عيون قل ارايتم ان اصبغ
 ماء علىكم فور اقيموا قل ارايتم ان اهلكنى
 الله ومعه معى اور حضا بمس يزير الطبرية مس
 عذابة اليم قل اه تم العلم عند الله اقل ار
 اقيم ان اصبغ ماء علىكم فور اقيموا ياتكم بمس
 محيى

يَا الشَّيْخَ خُذْنِيْهُ اِنْه لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُ
 اَنْ يَكْتَبَهُ الْخِيَاكُ اِنْه نَاسِـ
 كَثِيْرًا اَللّٰهُمَّ مَعَ مَا لَمْ
 الْحَوْبُ يَدَاخُوْنُ لَا تَلُوْمُوْنِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ حَمْدًا كَثِيْرًا
 يُوْفِيْهِ مِنَ النِّحْمِ مَا تَزِيْدُ
 مِنَ التَّخْيِيْرِ —————
 ٥ ٥ ٥ ٥ ٥

(For Ex libris only.)

(14)
 بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَالْإِحْسَانُ
 مِنْ قَدِيمٍ وَالْجُودُ وَالْمَنَ وَالْإِجْلَالُ وَالْكَرَمُ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ
 الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْخَلْقَ لِمَحَبَّتِهِ حَتَّى زُرَّاجُ الْعَالَمِ وَأَقْوَامُهُمْ

عن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم
 إذا لم يستطع أن يكتب الحياتة أن تكتبها كثيرا الكلام
 مع الكلام العجب إذا لم يستطع أن يكتبها قليلا لا يغويها الأظفار
 يا أخوتها التفت بالله لا تكتبوا في العين ذمها الجسد كذا
 اسم عمراه سيد مكان مولد وفوت نور يسى البهى يسى
 ملك العلم بند وفوت شينغ يسمنى محمد سيد
 الخوف وشينغ سليمان كعبه وشينغ جبريل عبد الله
 أن يشيت طالب العلم خمس وعشرين سنة بلاء
 مع مائة سنة بلاء في كل ما جيتش كبير
 فقل الإنسان كثيرا أخذ في مشى كبرى البهى باعوا زيدا
 النصر نى الشرى يمشى إلى الشيعة الكبير البهى الكبير

يمشى في البحر الكثير شهر ونصف شهر جاء في المكان
 يسمى في كلام نمراني يدعوا اشتري
 رجل صغير ضعيف سوء يسمى ونفسه كابر
 جدا لا خاف الله شيء ان رجل صغير لا يستطيع
 عن يحمل عملا شد يدا يجر من يده ونفس
 التي شهر اء يمشى الى مكان يسمى في
 رعى بيوت في شهر اء اء قل في البيوت التي يصلح
 رعى صبيبة يركب الخيل صبيبة جاء في المكان ابوه
 يقتلهم ابوه ان راعى رجل سودا في البيوت السبعة
 رجل يسمى هذه رجل اء اخر واحد منهم يركب
 الخيل مع الالعب كثير اء في يمشى معه
 اثنا عشر اميال في مكان يسمى في
 الى بيوت كثير اء لا يستطيع ان يخرج اقبه في بيوت
 الكثير يسمى في كلام نمراني ستة عشر
 يوم وليلة

(٢٦)
 في اليوم الجمعة جاء الى التبشير اجتمع الباب البيوت
 رعى رجال كثير كلهم نصراني فانه غير اسك
 عصر عيسى بهيلا فاعلا يسمع كلام النصي اني رعى
 رجل يسمى باب ممد في بيتكمنه اخرج البيوت
 التبشير في رصعة كثيرا يمشي معهم الى مكانهم
 اتيت في المكان ممد اربع ليال ونهار رجل يسمى
 نديم عويي جوز بنته ممد في بنس ممد
 سالتني رصعة يمشي في المكان يسمى بليد
 نعم رصعة يمشي معهم اتيت في المكان
 نديم عويي الى الان هـ

فيل ان جاء في اليد دخل عويي اشترى رجل
 يسمى مدل جاء في مدل سالتني ايمشي الى مكان في النش
 افه لالا لالا لالا ان يمشي في المكان
 نديم عويي ان اتيت
 في اليد نديم عويي

اعطى زكاته كل سنة وذهب وفضة وزرع
 وبقر وضغن وتمر واولاد وجمع وجمع
 كلهم اعطى زكاته يمشى الى الجهاد كل سنة
 الى القبار يمشى الى مكة ومدينة
 ابوك جيد سنة ولد مع خمس بنتا وامه ثلاث
 ولد وبنت واحد في يوم تركت في بلاد سنة
 سبع وثلاثين سنة مقام في البلاد نصراني
 اربع وعشرين سنة

في سنة واحد الف مع ثمانين مائة
 واحد مع ثلاثين سنة
 يسوع المسيح

يا اهل نوري يا اهل سوري يا اهل
 يا اهل قري يا اهل اول الولد اجمع عوي يسمي
 ثمانين مع اخوة البنت يسمي ما

19

هذه الجيل جيل جيد : ثوم غويش نيل غويش
 تلد اشان ولد و بنت واحد ولد الاول يسمى عديم
 والاخر يدون وثمة يسمى موالسة : سيد عديم وثمة
 عويش تلد اشان ولد واحد يسمى بنات الاول ثوم
 يدون ومالسة وميريم وسباية وما بنت
 وليسة هذه الجيل جيل جيد جدا

ويدون عويش زوجته يدون موالسة
 زوجة ماله تلد ثلاثة واشان والامات ثلاث
 يدون اشان =

يا اهل مري يا اهل ثوم يا اهل عديم
 اهل عديم اهل ميريم اهل سباية
 الى الجيل الجديد خاف الله جدا

(20)

الاول

انعم من عبد يفرع الحق في الغيب الى العظمى
 على قلبه يجمع عروس مع زوجته يفرع الانجيل
 يفرع الانجيل بثبيرة الله ربنا خالفنا وما
 لنا ومصلح احوالنا حالاً ومعالجاً وضلاً
 لا وجوب له قدرته

ابو تع فلب الى الانجيل الى سبيل
 الهدى الحمد لله رب العالمين
 حمدك كثير يا رب من النعم
 ما تزايد من الخير

٢١
 من اجله ان القشرع بقوسى اعملى **والنكمة**
 والمحو كانا بيسوع المسيح

الاول محمد

ان يهلك قال الحمد لله رب العلمين الرحمن
 الرحيم ملئ يوم الدين اياك بعبد وايا را
 نستعين اهدنا الصراط المستقيم صلى الله
 الذى انعمت عليهم غير المغضوب
 عليهم ولا الضالين **اميس**
والان قول ربنا يسوع المسيح

يا ابانا الذى فى السموات يتقد من اسمك قائم
 ملكوتك تكون مشيئتكم كما فى السماء وعلى الارض
 فخير من الذى فى السموات اعطانا اليوم وانجى لنا علينا
 كما انجى نحن كمن لنا عليه ولا تتركنا للتجار
 لكن نجنا من الشرير وان لا اله الا انت والحمد لله رب العالمين

(22)

اذ مغامر في بلادنا بسبب الضرر العظيم
 اذ العجاء كلهم باعوا الى يد النصارى
 اشترى يمشى الى البحر شهر ونصف شهر
 الى مكان يسمى المستنق في بلادهم
 اذ دغته في اليد رجيل صغير تحيى
 سوء لا خاف الله شيء لا يفزع لا يصلي
 اذ خاف ان يشق رجل سوء كثير في نوب
 اذ يجر الى شهراء الله بنا يفد منا
 الى يد رجل صالح فاف الله يحب يعمل
 عملا صالحا يسمى نزل فيم غويش
 مع اخوتهم يسمى بكنهه ذون غويش
 هكذا رجلي صالحين
 في مكان بلية كلوت
 بشفنا

(23)

ان ثبت في اليد عويم لا يضرب
 لا يستمر لا جوع لا عرو لا عمل شديد
 ان لا يستطيع ان يعمل عملا شديدا ان
 رجل صغير مريض ثبتا عشريين سنة
 لا يرى ضرر شيء في يد عويم —